

7

modern music on cue

THE 7's

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NOV. / DEC. 1998
ISSUE NUMBER 21



SCATERD FEW

THE/DANCE/REPORT

STARFLYER 59



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One Eighty
Almonzo
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Fold Zandura
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Five Iron Frenzy

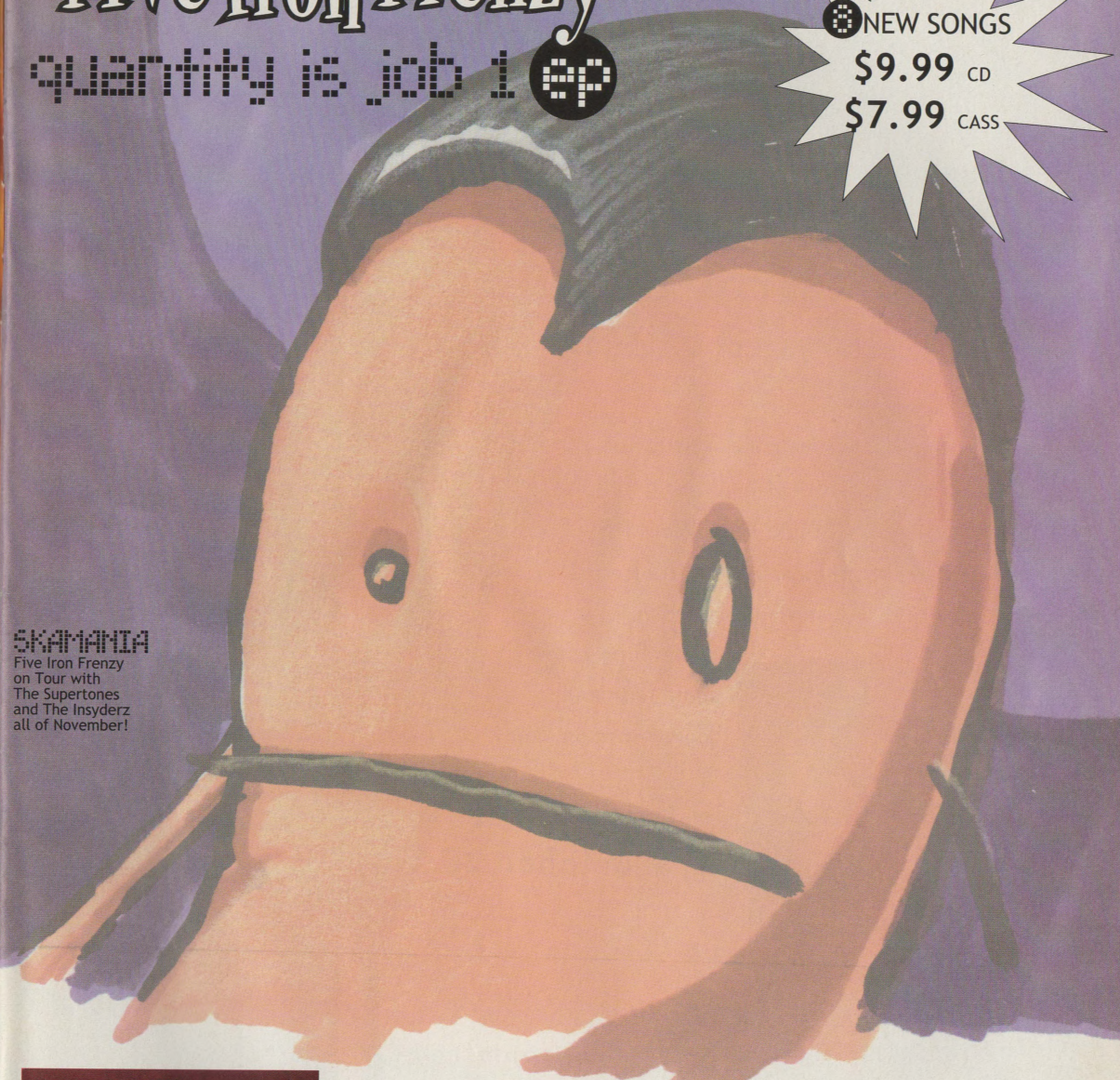
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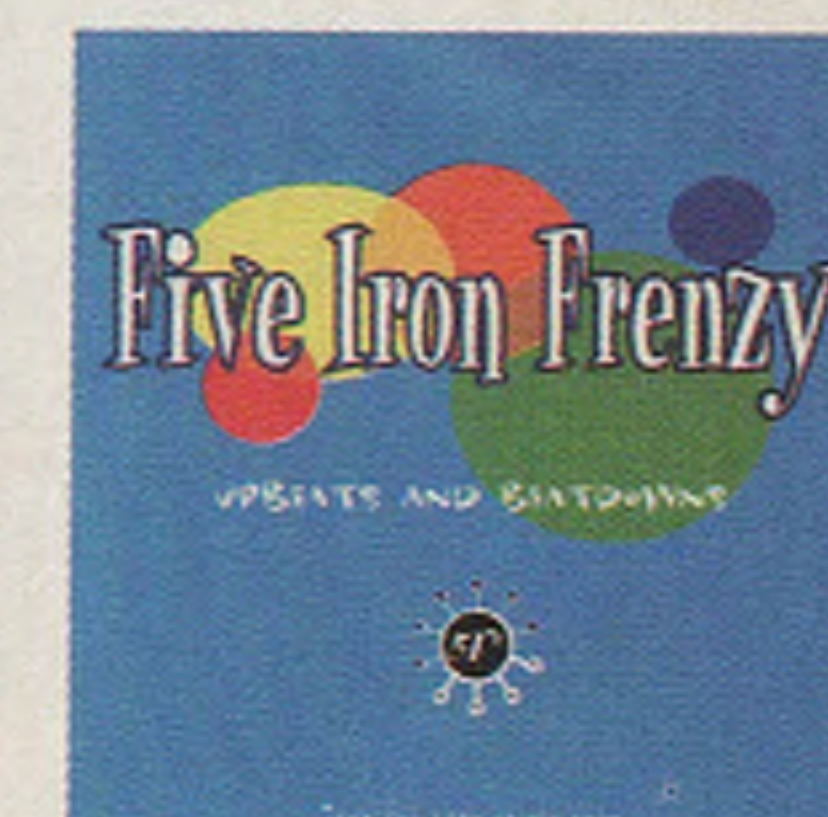
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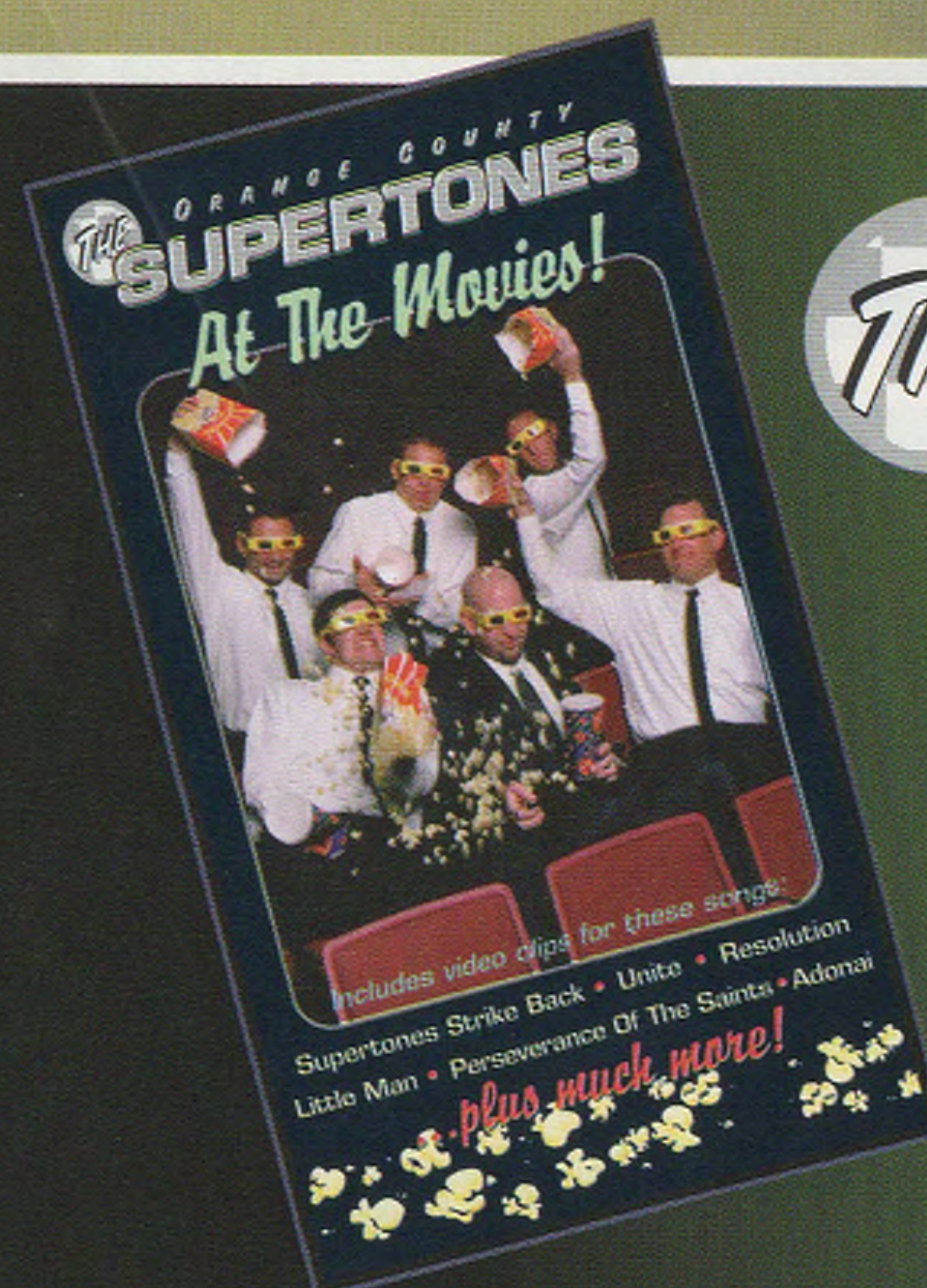
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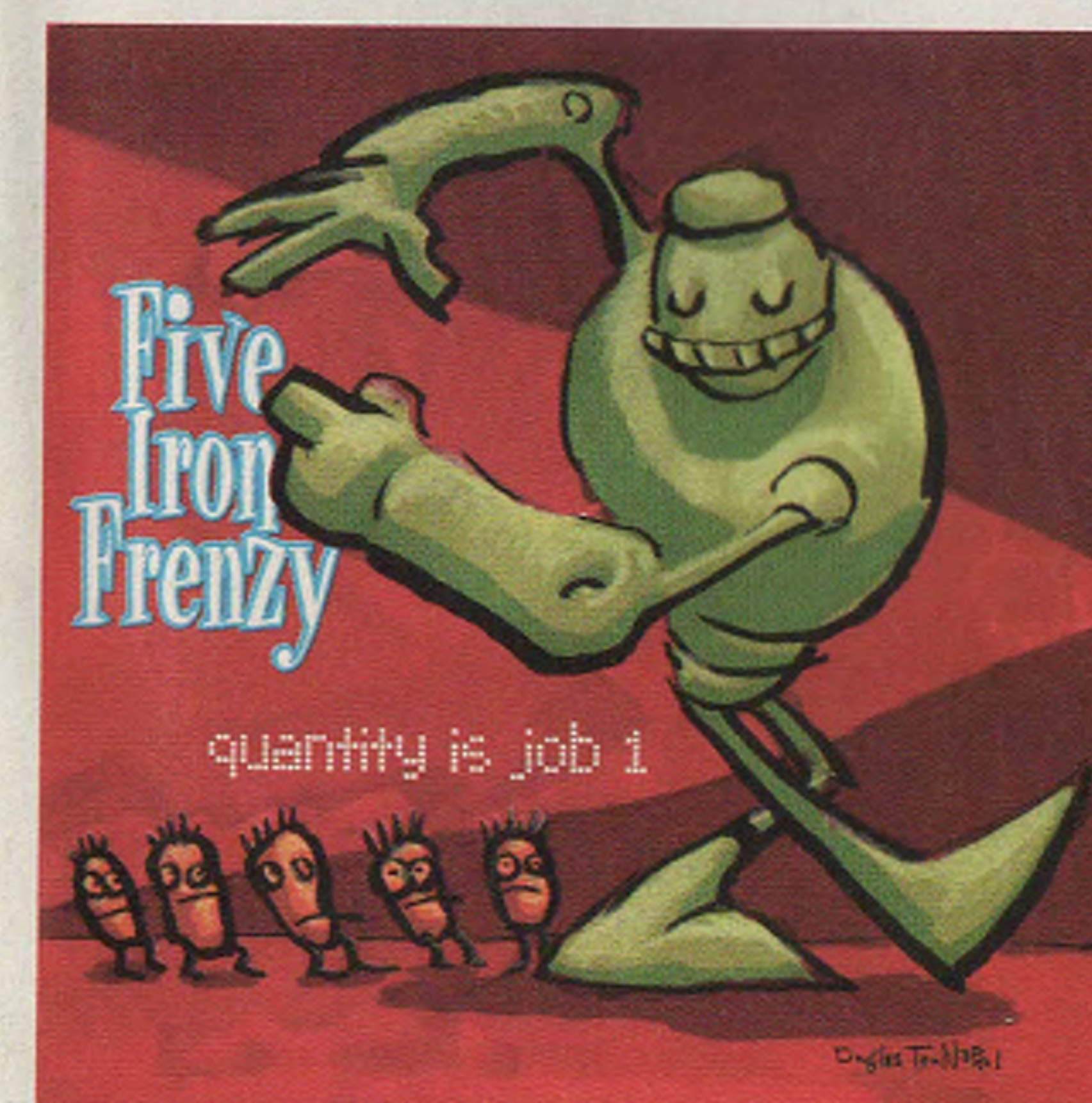
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herefore, there is now no hesitation.

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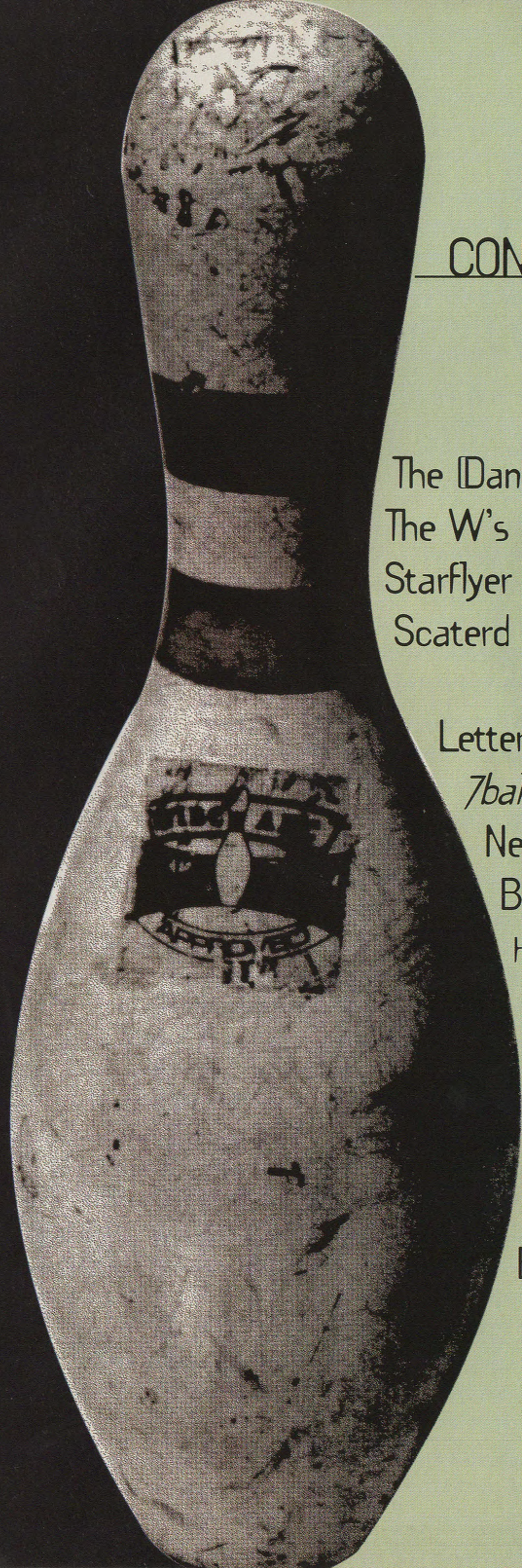


see jeni on petra's God fixation tour
this fall! Also appearing, Broomtree

- | | | |
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| 10/3 Portland, OR | 10/17 Lima, OH | 11/06 St. Louis, MO |
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| 10/9 Dickinson, ND | 10/25 Lancaster, PA | 11/13 Adamsville, TN |
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No 20

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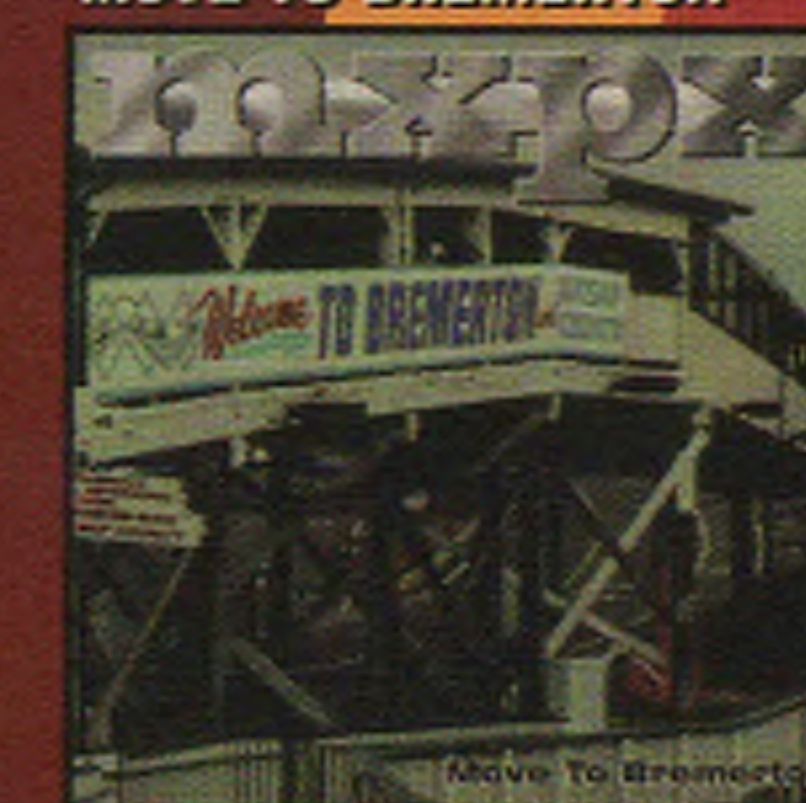
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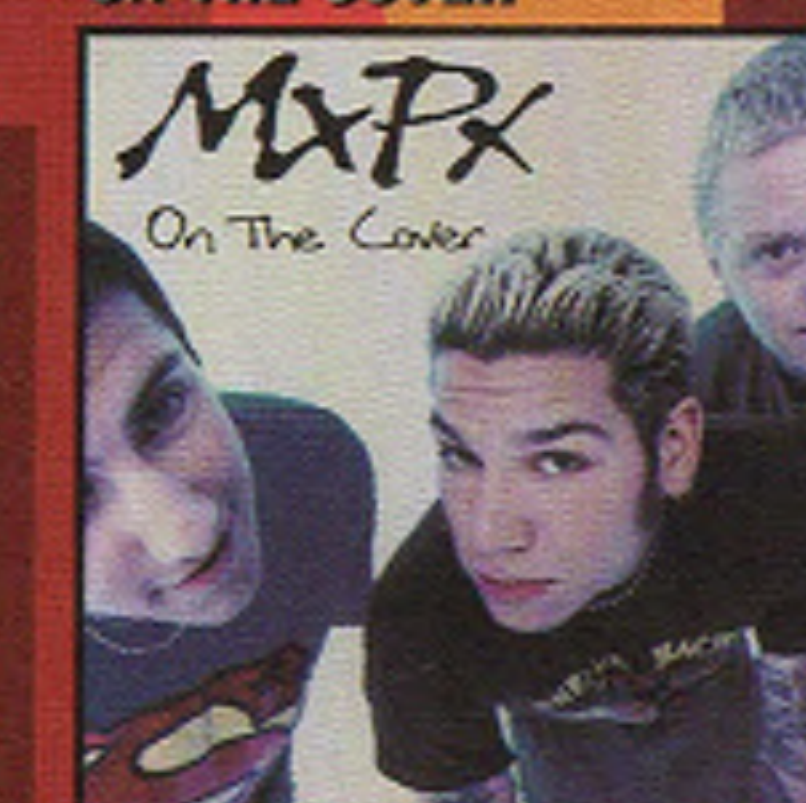
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MOVE TO BREMERTON



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90 LB WUSS
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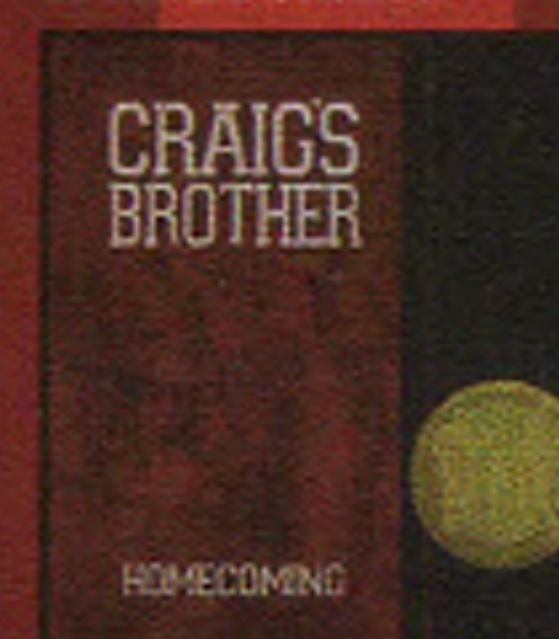
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HIGH SCHOOL ROCK



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About two months ago I wrote a very long, intelligent and truthful email to you and yet I see that it was not printed. I was wondering just why it did not see fit for print over some others

such as—Your mag is sooooo cool! I wish it could come out every month! - Sarah Floydada, TX; You guys are the best magazine ever. I'm really into Christian music. I listen to it all the time and spend all my money on it. - Andy via the Internet; Your mag is the best! Me and my friends have a band; we really stink but I hope someday we'll be in 7ball. - Mimo Morreale Tulsa,

year subscription for 7 of my friends. And if this got published, I would read it 7 times. Is this good enough to get into the mag?

Michael Hamrick via the Internet

[If you really want to get your name in 7ball, leave \$7,000 in 7

unmarked bags at the corner of 7th Ave. We'll see what we can do.]

What the heck happened to Scott Silletta [of Plankeye]?

Kenny Allen via the Internet

work for an independent band that lives out what you wrote. I gave them a copy. Now we all love you. Working in the industry we do, it is easy to get blinded by the mediocrity. I've always known it thrived, but you put to words why it always bothered me so much. Now your article is stuck to the wall of my office, kind of as a constant reminder of *Whose*

we are and why we became artists in the first place—we were made in His image, you know.

Leah Peaks via the Internet

You seem to have this "because I said

sayin' to make yourself look more right.

Jeff Edwards
Fairfield, CA

There is really no such thing as Christian music. There aren't any particular notes on the musical scale that are "Christian" or

"secular." It's either an E chord or a C chord or what have you. Music is music, whether it's played by Fold Zandura or the Smashing Pumpkins.

If you read *Rolling Stone* or *Spin*, the reviewer does not focus in on the artist's lifestyle. When a "Christian" album gets reviewed, I think it should be judged on the same criteria: Is the music good? Are the lyrics well written? Is it worth my money? I'm not saying spirituality isn't important, just that it shouldn't be the pinnacle for judging an artist's work.

Dave Greshel
via the Internet

Could you put something in about The W's? I love the way they sound. Not your average ska sound, I mean. Kinda swingy. I know

as soon as I put this in the mail I'll probably get an issue featuring The W's, but

at least my letter might get published!

Ryan Frazier
Brooksville, FL

[Ding, Ding, Ding ... What do we have for him, Bob?]

Funny how the most interesting page one month can fall to the "textbook" rating for originality the next. There's not much difference between the new *Pure Rock Report* page and the keyboard I'm writing this on. If you're going to make it plain, at least make it one of those magic eye

things.

Steven Pautz
via the Internet

I just got back from Creation '98 and I bought your package (including CDs, mags, and a 7ball beach ball).

Your CDs of assorted artists have encouraged me to buy some of their music.

Mike Parrott
Troy, MI

[Warning: The beach ball is not an approved life-saving or flotation device. Use at your own risk.]

I find the

letters section somewhat sickening in that so many kids write in and say things like "Whoa, man, 7ball like rules" or "Your mag is the bestest in the whole-wide world." Yeah, you guys help spread the word, but cut the praise of a magazine and start praising God.

Joey Miller

via the Internet

Your mag would be better if you had tablature or something like that. I love Christian ska and I noticed a lot of your readers like ska, but I rarely see an article on any ska bands.

Mark Davis
Mackinaw, IL

I live in Brazil, and a friend sends me the mag. This mag is so cool. I love it! May God bless you guys at 7ball! Ska, ska, ska, ska!

Stephen Spencer
Taquara - RS
Brazil

Will you please write more about The Supertones? They are the best ska band in

the world! I really enjoy your magazine and *GAS Collection* CDs.

Amanda
via the Internet

I was reading your July/August issue and came across a letter from someone who wanted to hear more bands that wrote all of their songs about God. From a songwriter's viewpoint I would say this: God has called many different musicians to sing about many different things. Some have been called to write music that people can relate to. Having been through a lot of hard things, I can say that having a song you can relate to during a hard time can help more than anything else.

Elizabeth Hendren
via the Internet

I think you guys should start using that "Pharisee-O-Meter" (OK, so that was said with a large amount of sarcasm). Just keep it real with Jesus.

Matt Mottershead
Hopkins, SC

There is a rising theme I hear from a lot of the letters in your "Feedback" section. We seem to be judging way too much. In my eyes, there are two types of artists in the Christian scene: artists for Gospel-spreading reasons and artists to edify and help relate to the Body of Christ. Not everyone is gonna look the same, sound the same when they praise the Lord or dress like "Bible Belt" Christians. Accept them for who they are in the Body and try not to judge too harshly because of your prejudices. No, we shouldn't accept those things that contradict "basic Christian values." Maybe those who are so eager to throw the first stone should study their faith more closely.

Jamie Curtis
Murfreesboro, TN

[We love your movies.]

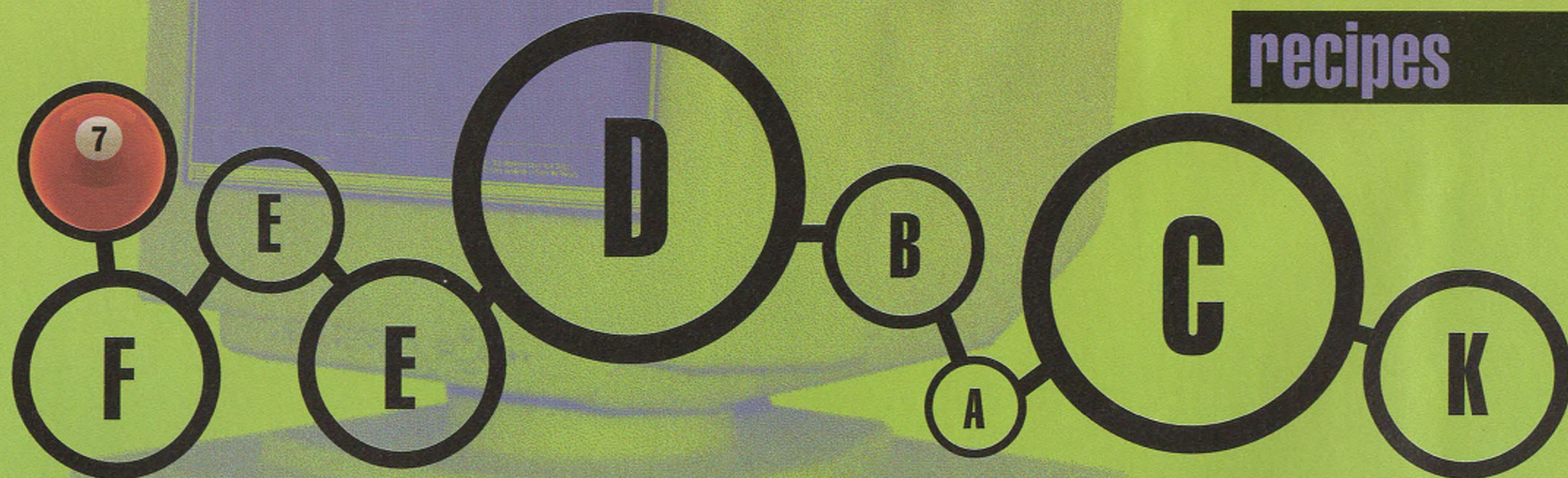
I'm sad when a band will try to preach the Gospel at a show and they're told to "shut up and play." I love music, but I love Jesus more. Music is just music without Christ. When listening to Christian music, think about the lyrics (not just the

letters

email

questions

recipes



OK. I would dearly love to have a full explanation on the subject. Or do you people only print mail that praises and worships you guys for "your" magazine?

Mike Fuller
via the Internet

[Scott Silletta and Adam Ferry both quit Plankeye. Adam will be a youth pastor and

Scott is working on other musical projects. The band is down to a three-piece, with original members Luis and Eric sharing vocals.]

This summer I was work-

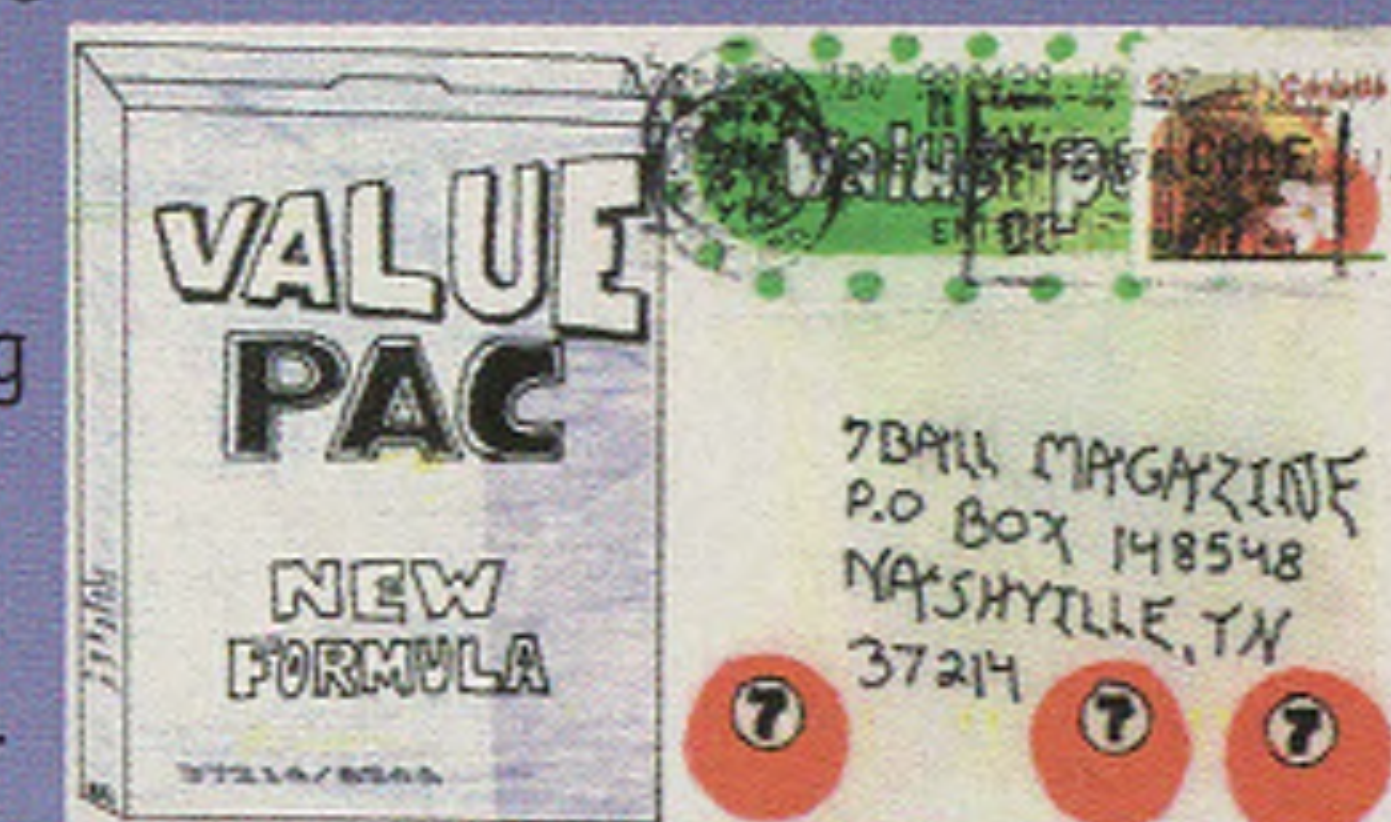
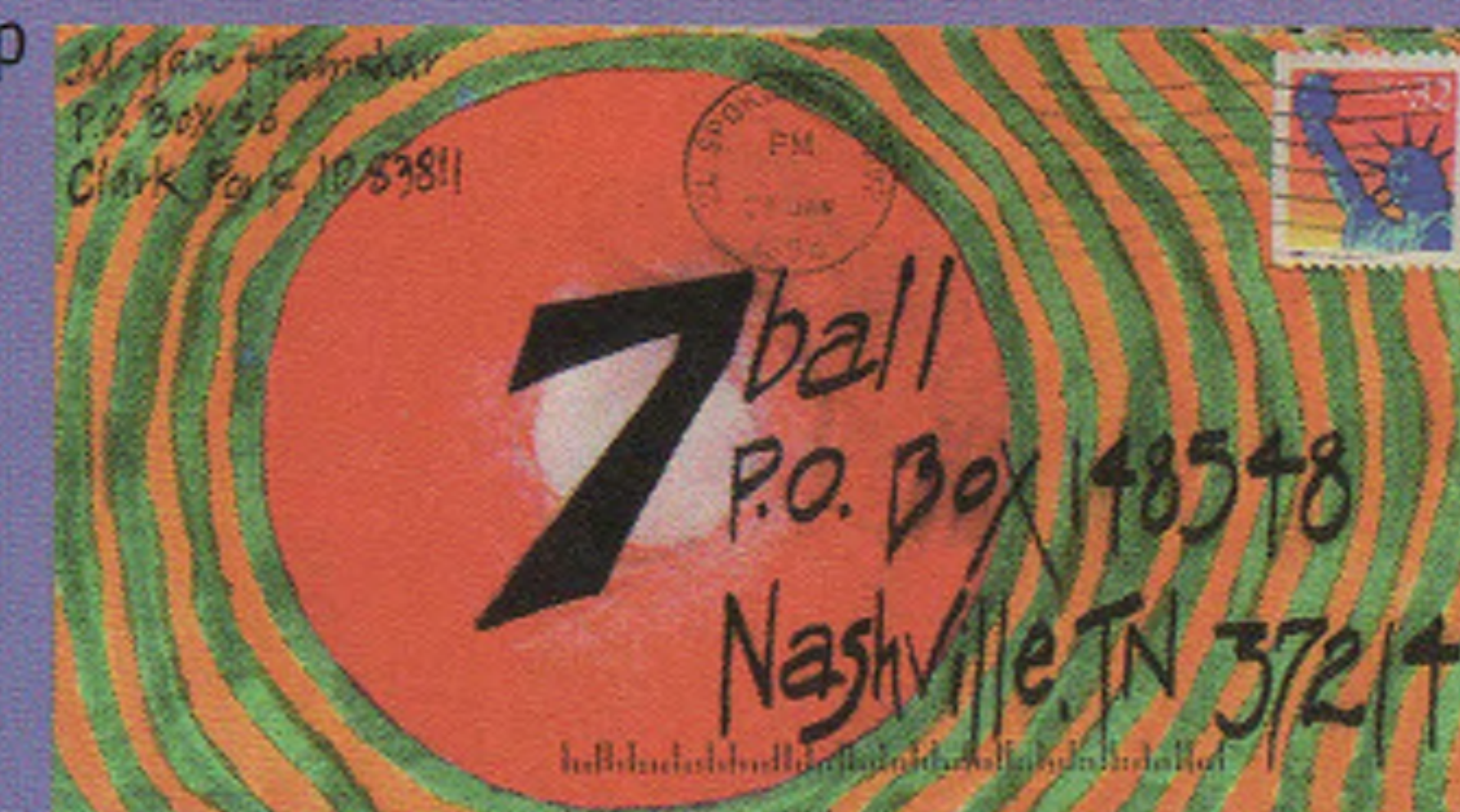
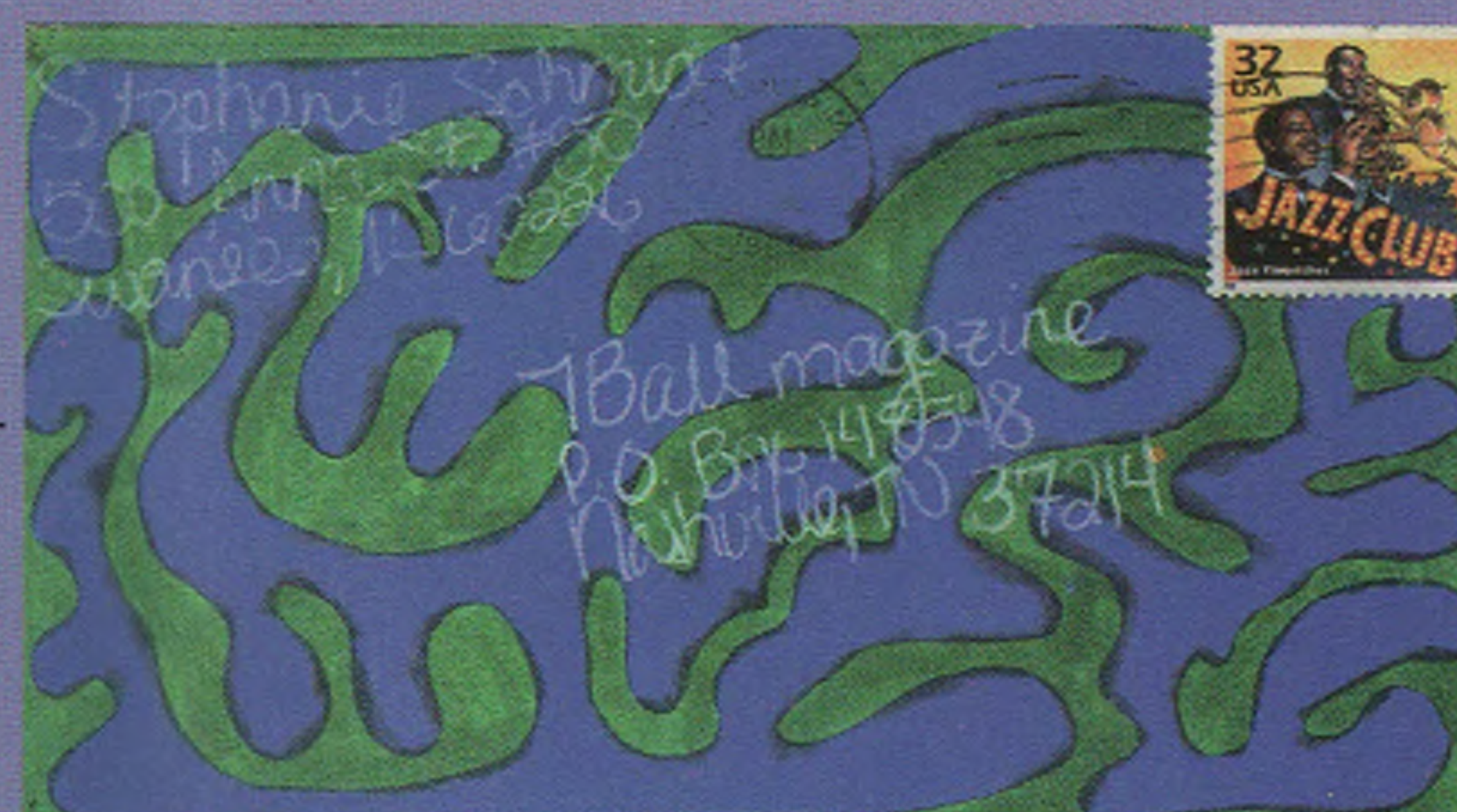
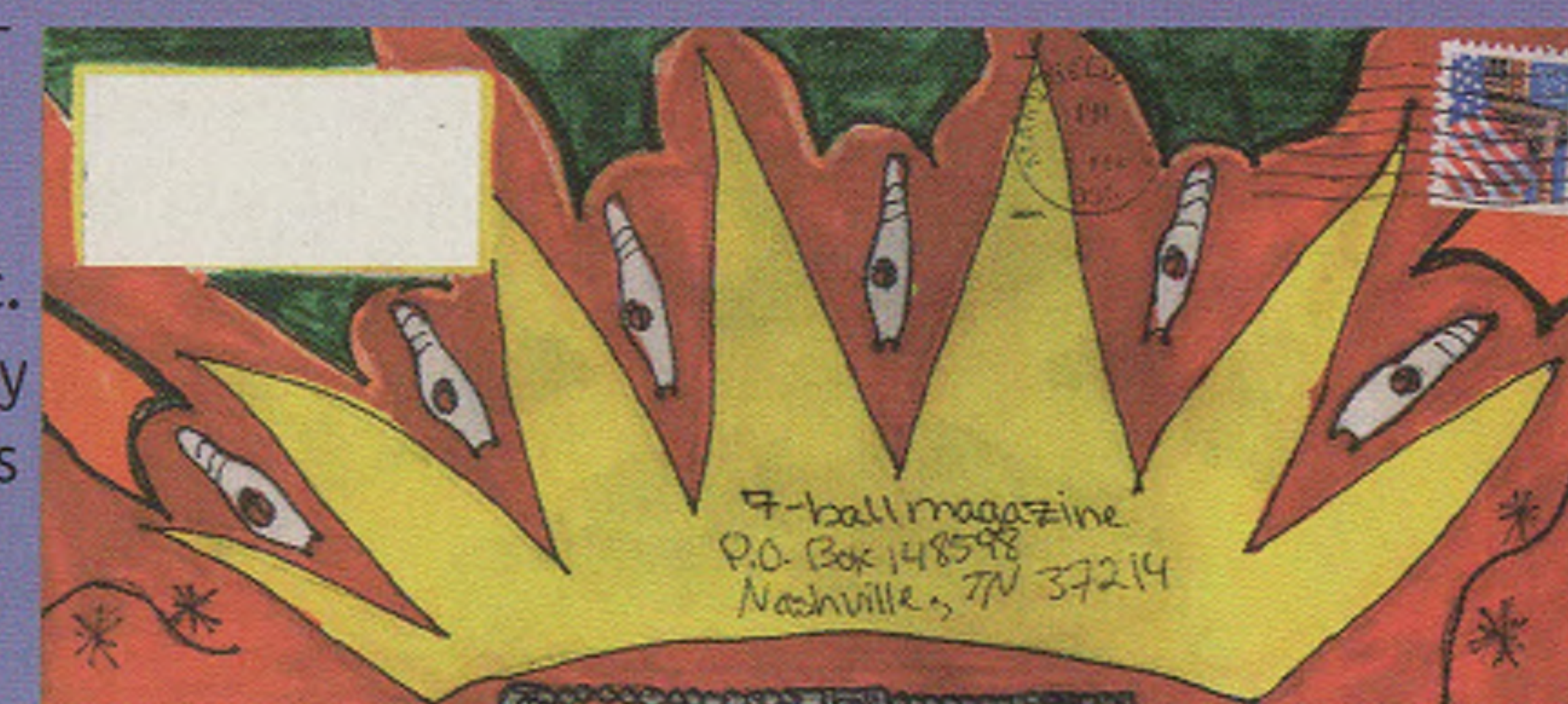
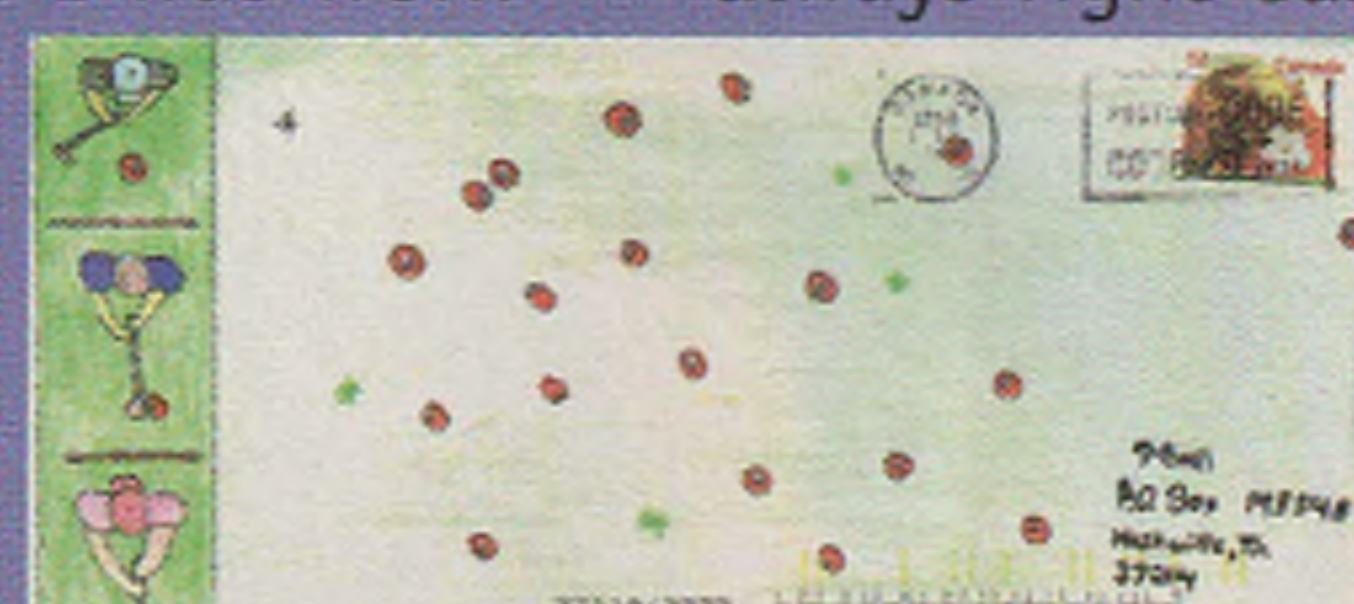
ing at a management company and read "Shadows Of The Real Deal" ["Blah Blah Blah," #18, May/June '98]. I read it again. I made copies.

A few weeks later, I packed up and left Nashville to move to central Virginia and

so" attitude. Like, "Some people don't understand, there is no such thing as Christian music" ["Blah Blah Blah," #19 July/Aug '98]. Why? Because you said so? Take a Northern California valley kid and let her listen to East Indian music. She's apt to say *That's not music* even though it is.

But I guess you won't hear me. You're always right cuz you got the magazine and I'm just a community college student sitting at home on his computer. I'm not right cuz I say so. Neither are you.

Even if you do put Scriptures in there that are loosely connected to what you're



guitar solo). If I hear one more band say, "We're not a Christian band. We're just a band of

Christians," I think I'll puke. I don't want to sound angry. I'm really a nice person.

Tyler Clark
via the Internet

I have a hard time understanding a band that claims a sound such as "British pop-meets-surf rock (with a little punk thrown in)." It seems like a bad attempt to lump together contrasting genres in order to appeal to more people.

Jey
via the Internet

[I bet you'll really hate that new ska-meets-polka-meets-grindcore band all the kids are talking about.]

I wanted to tell you how much I enjoyed "The [Rap] Report" in the July/Aug issue! One reason I like your mag so much is I have a wide taste in music, just like you guys! Keep up the fly work.

Grae McCullough
Winnfield, LA

I am a 15-year-old who lives in Manhattan, Kan. There are a lot of great groups out there with cool music and a message that only reaches Christians. 7ball is a magazine my peers can understand and enjoy. None of us can save people. Only God can. All we do is influence people's ideas and decisions. I always get an extra 7ball and give it to people who aren't Christians, or just need some encouragement for being a Christian and still have fun.

Steve Asbell,
Manhattan, KS

Please cover some hardcore stuff. Hardcore music is bigger than you may

think.

Lyle Aspinall
Canada

I am the new drummer for Room Full of Walters. We are proud to be listed

in your mag and to be on the compilation CD. I know it may seem weird but I'm not lying about being Alan Austin's replacement! Oh, and I love 7ball. It is great!

Kyle Hupp
via the Internet
P.S. The rest of the guys say hello!

I'm writing you guys to ask for prayer. A few months ago I met the guys from Speck on a YWAM outreach at a Hopi reservation. Now, I've joined as the new drummer. Although we've been playing some regular shows, our real passion is for native youth on the reservations. Indian kids have four to six times as much alcoholism, suicide and teen pregnancy than the rest of America. Please pray for salvation for the kids who come to the concerts—and that God would break the spir-

You have no right to judge (i.e., Steve Ptasznik/"Heart-O-Meter"). 2) The layout is weak. 3) The only bands that get any play are trendy (Value-Pac, Ghoti Hook, Supertones, etc). 4) Originality. What originality? There is none. The comic strip, the little bracketed responses to mail, the articles themselves; they're tired and uninspired.

Ron Cates
via the Internet

Thank you for that article on Steve Taylor. He's a great artist. I wonder if you could put posters in your mag. I

know you already whip every other magazine with your CDs, but it would make your mag even more awesome.

Chris Martin
Prattville, AL

Now that I've been in 7ball, my all time fave magazine, there are no more hills to climb. Cool to see us right next to our other Swedish friends, Blindsight [7ball #20, Sep/Oct '98]. BoH from The Misc is president of Day-Glo Records (Stockholm), who got Blindsight signed to Tooth & Nail. The background in those pics of Blind and The Misc is from that festival in Finland when we played in front of 8,000 people.

I never wrote anything to anyone else that had us in their magazine because, frankly, I didn't care. But I've been waiting for 7ball, cuz it's like New York: If I can make it there, I'll make it anywhere.

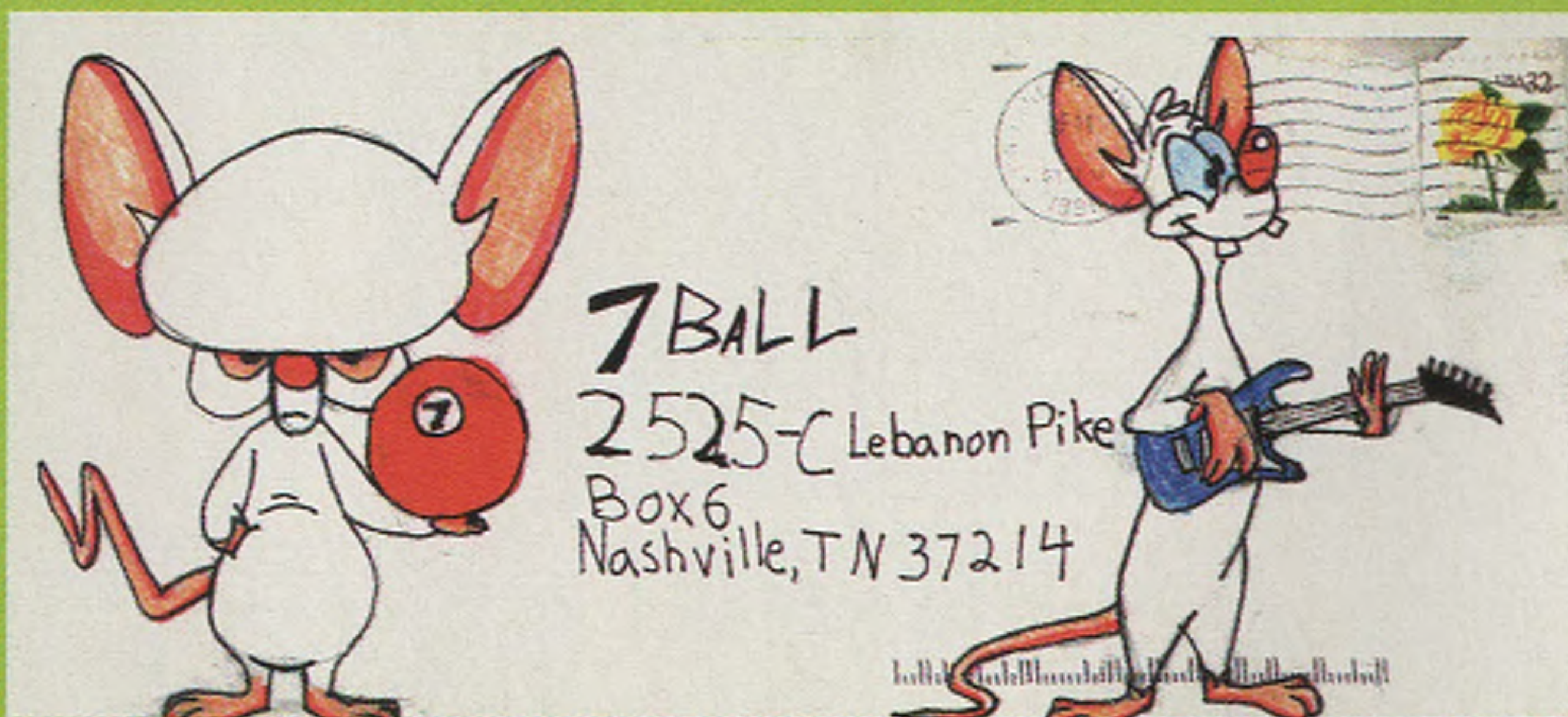
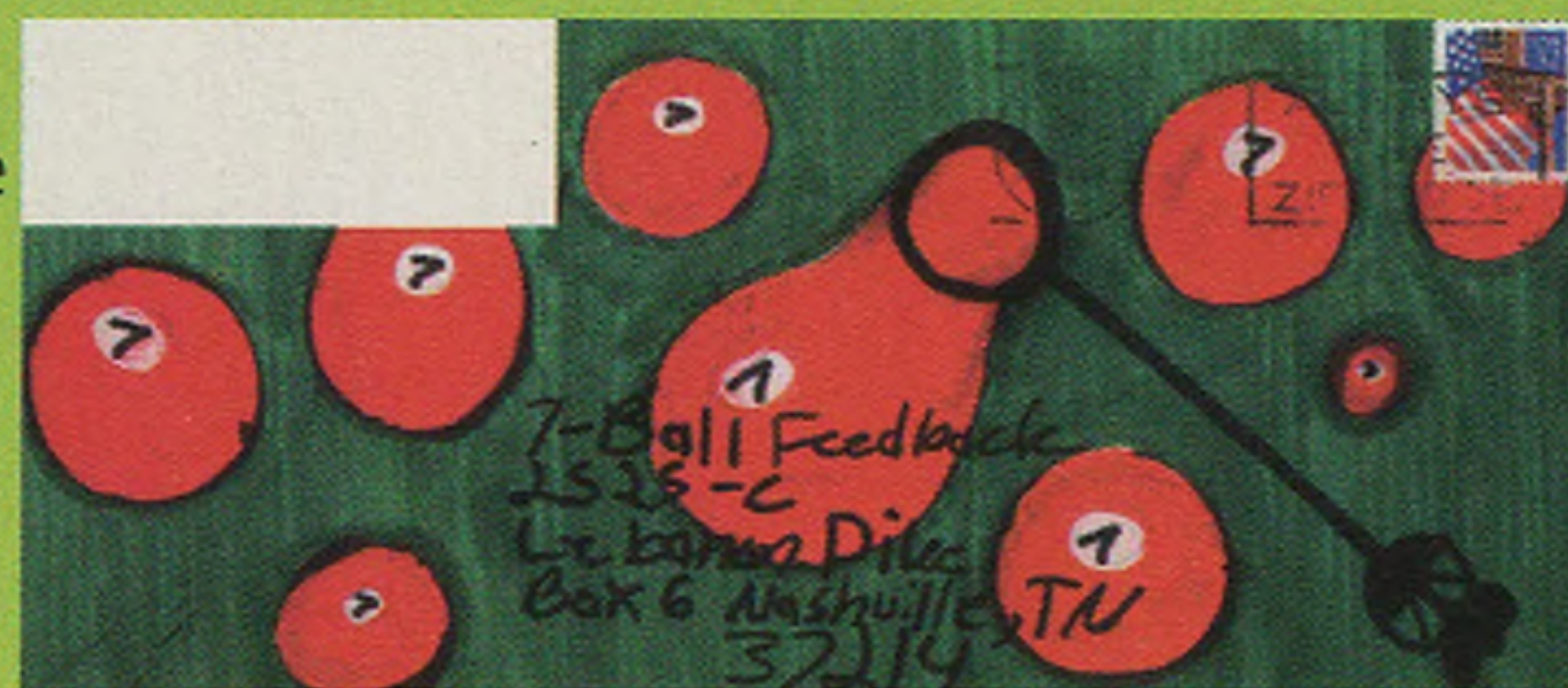
Thanks!

Stef Loy
The Miscellaneous
via the Internet

We reserve the right to edit letters for space, clarity and because it gives our monkey something to do. Send to 7ball Feedback, 2525-C Lebanon Pike, Box 6, Nashville, TN 37214. Email us at

[7ball@7ball.com]. Send subscription questions to [subscriptions@7ball.com]. Send indie materials to Dale Wilstermann at the same mailing address.

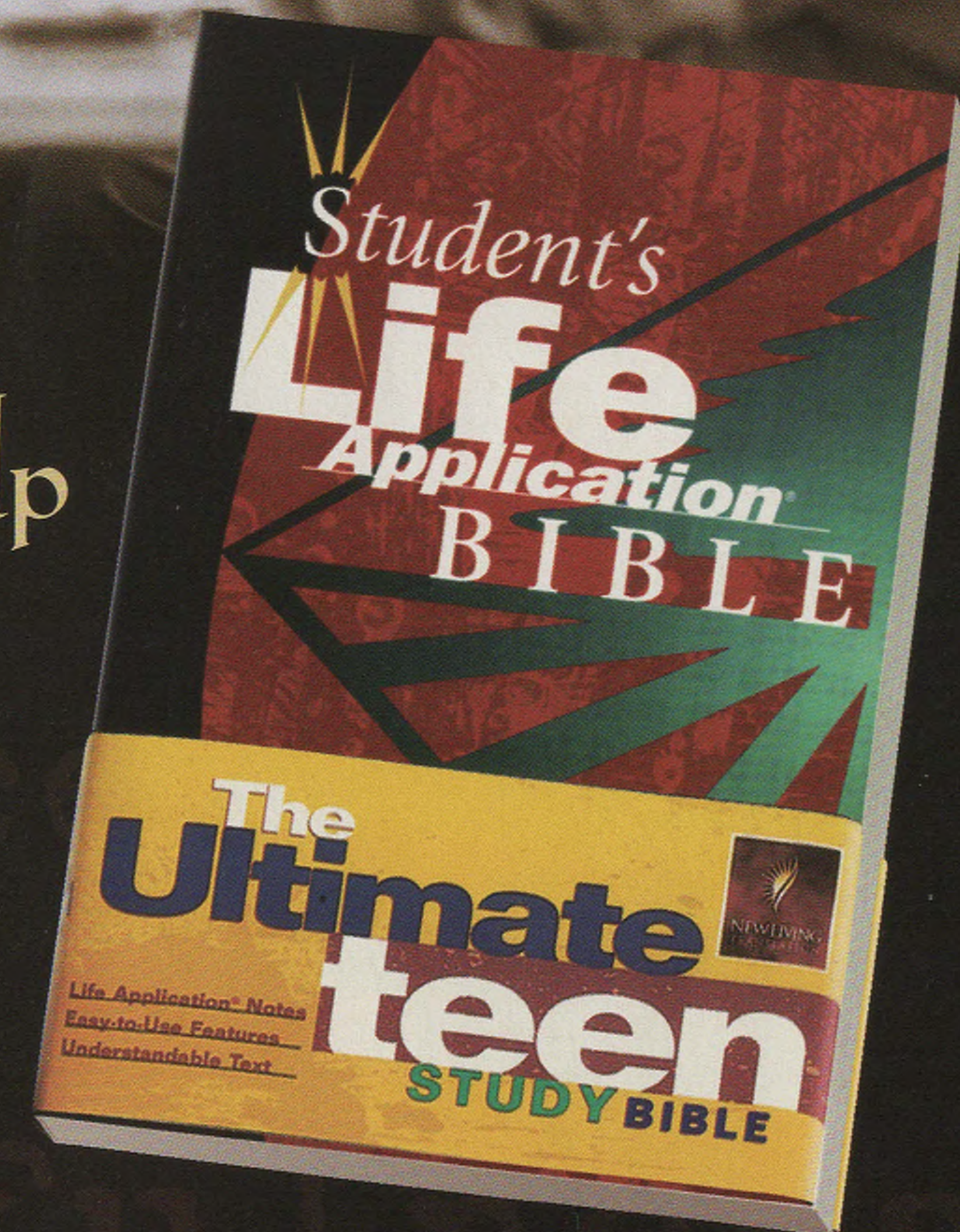
I'm very disappointed with 7ball. Several things irritate me. 1) It's a glorified teeny-bopper magazine. Ignorant kids writing in telling their immature, closed-minded, judgmental, pointless opinions.



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Live It Now

penpals

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Fave Bands: Stryper, Room Full of Walters, Grammatrain
Fave Festival: Cornerstone

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Fave Festival: Creation

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Fave Festival: Sonshine

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2218 Seipstown Rd.
Fogelsville, PA 18051
Fave Bands: Prayer Chain, Poor Old Lu, Jars of Clay
Fave Festival: Purple Door

To become pen pals with other 7ball readers, send your name, age, address, gender, three favorite bands and favorite festival. If you are under 18, you need to send a signed note from your parent or legal guardian releasing us to print your address. Mail your info to: 7ball Pen Pals, 2525-C Lebanon Pike, Box 6, Nashville, TN 37214. Fax us at (615) 872-9786. Email us at [7ball@7ball.com].

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nov/dec 1998
number 21

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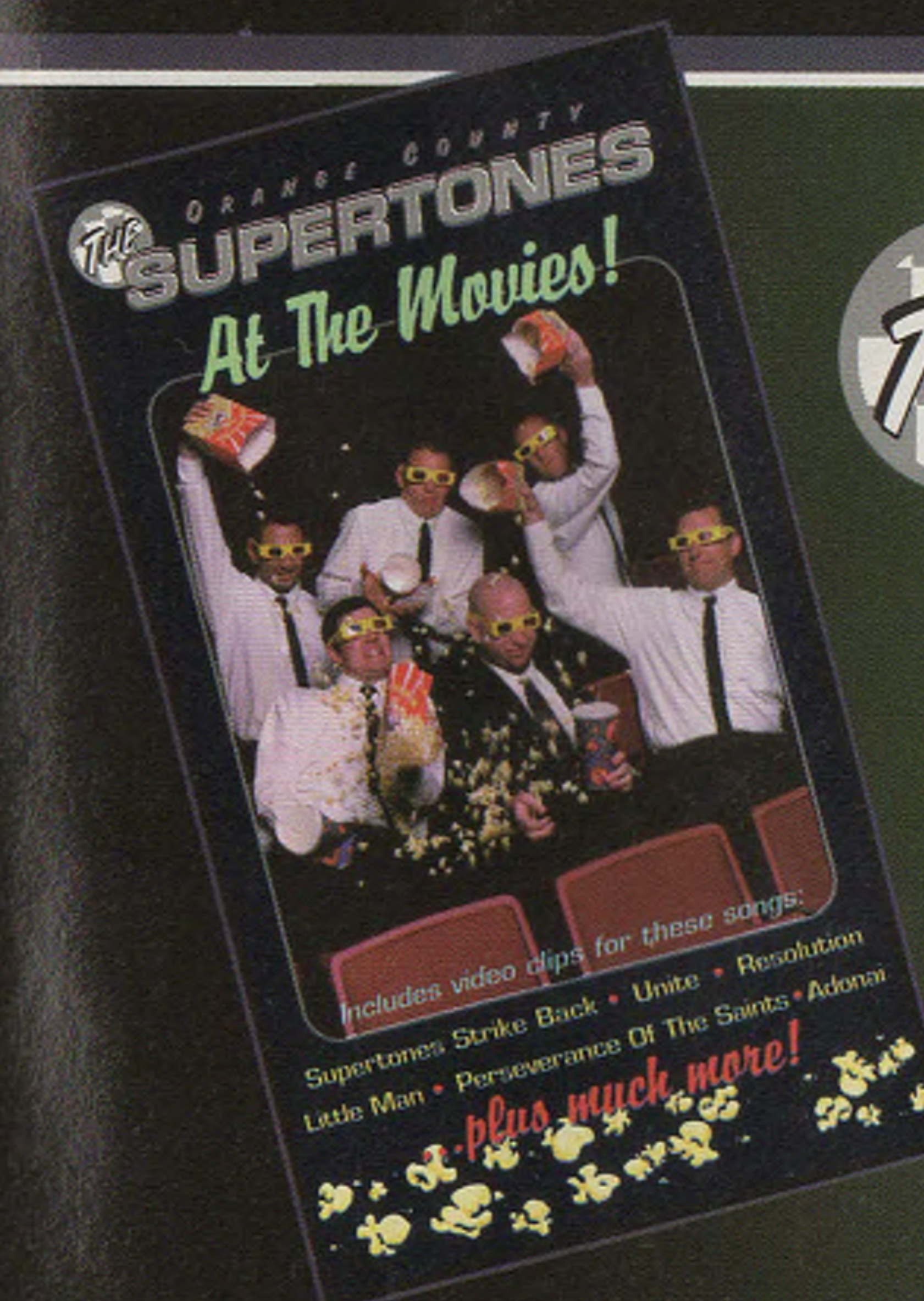
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it's a little bit ska, it's a little bit swing... it's crackerjack!

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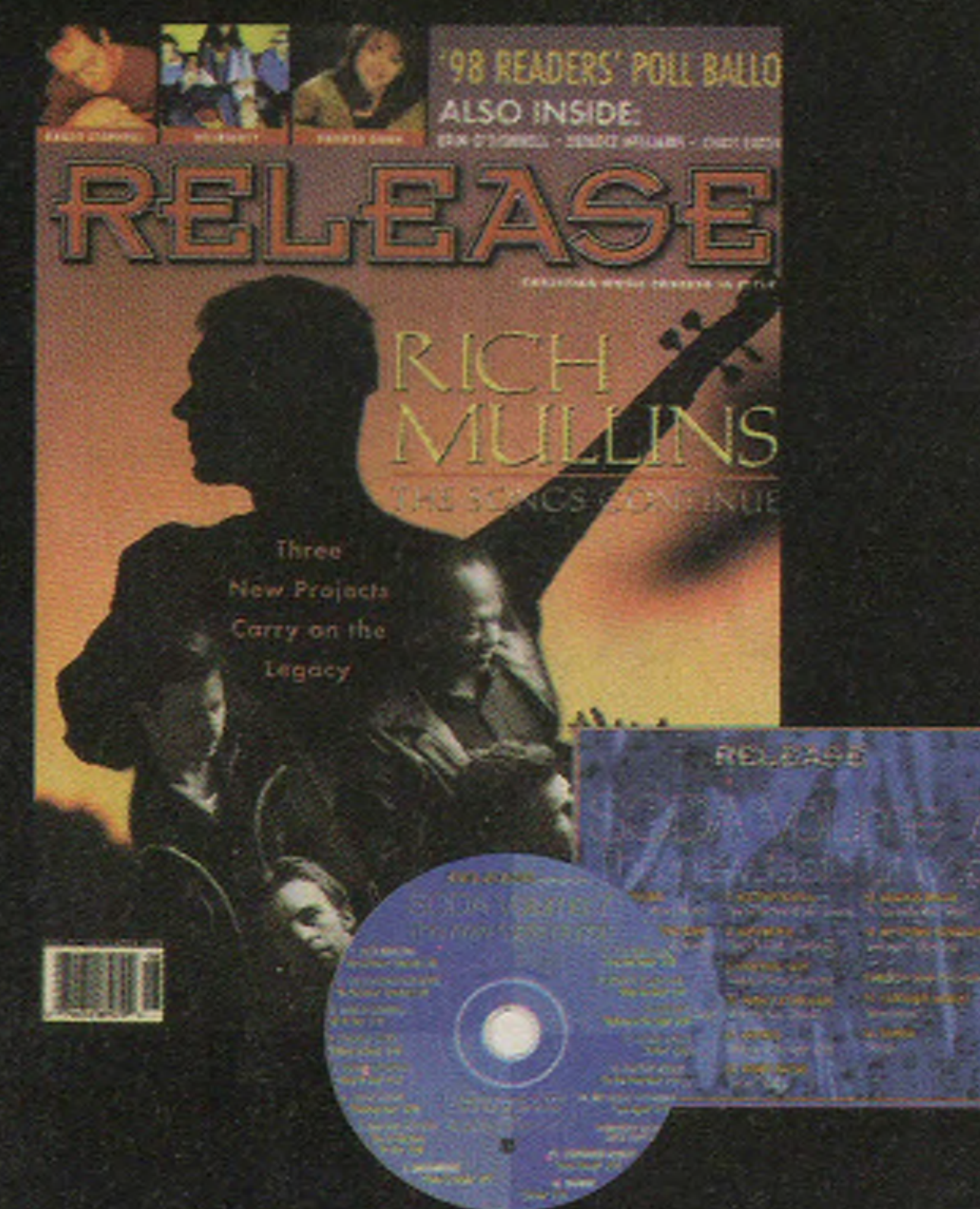
Each issue comes with a collector's
series compilation CD, packed full with 15
songs from the artists you love and new
artists you won't hear anywhere else.

Release magazine highlights the buzz
artists in Christian pop music, like Crystal
Lewis, Jennifer Knapp, God's Property,
Third Day and Jaci Velasquez. It, too,
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Put them together and you've got all
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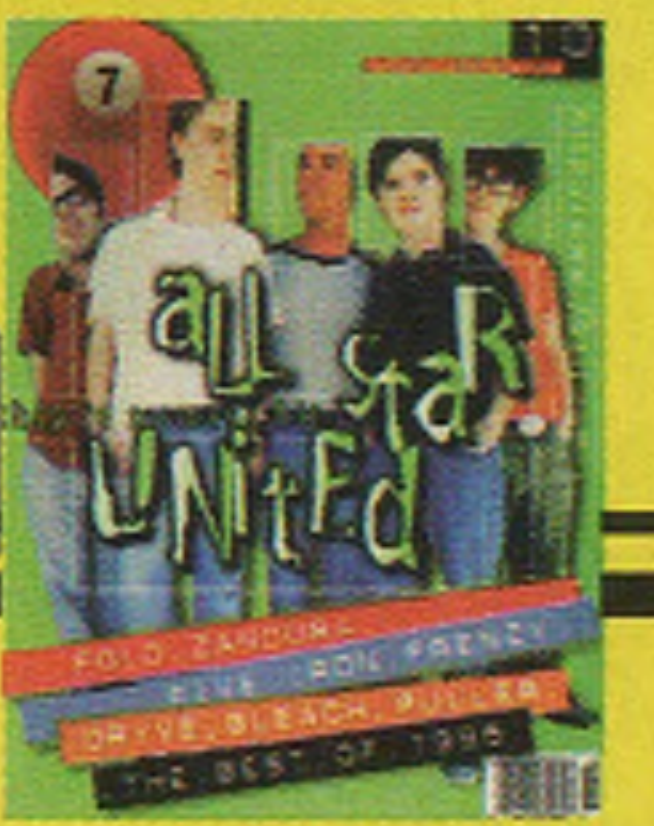
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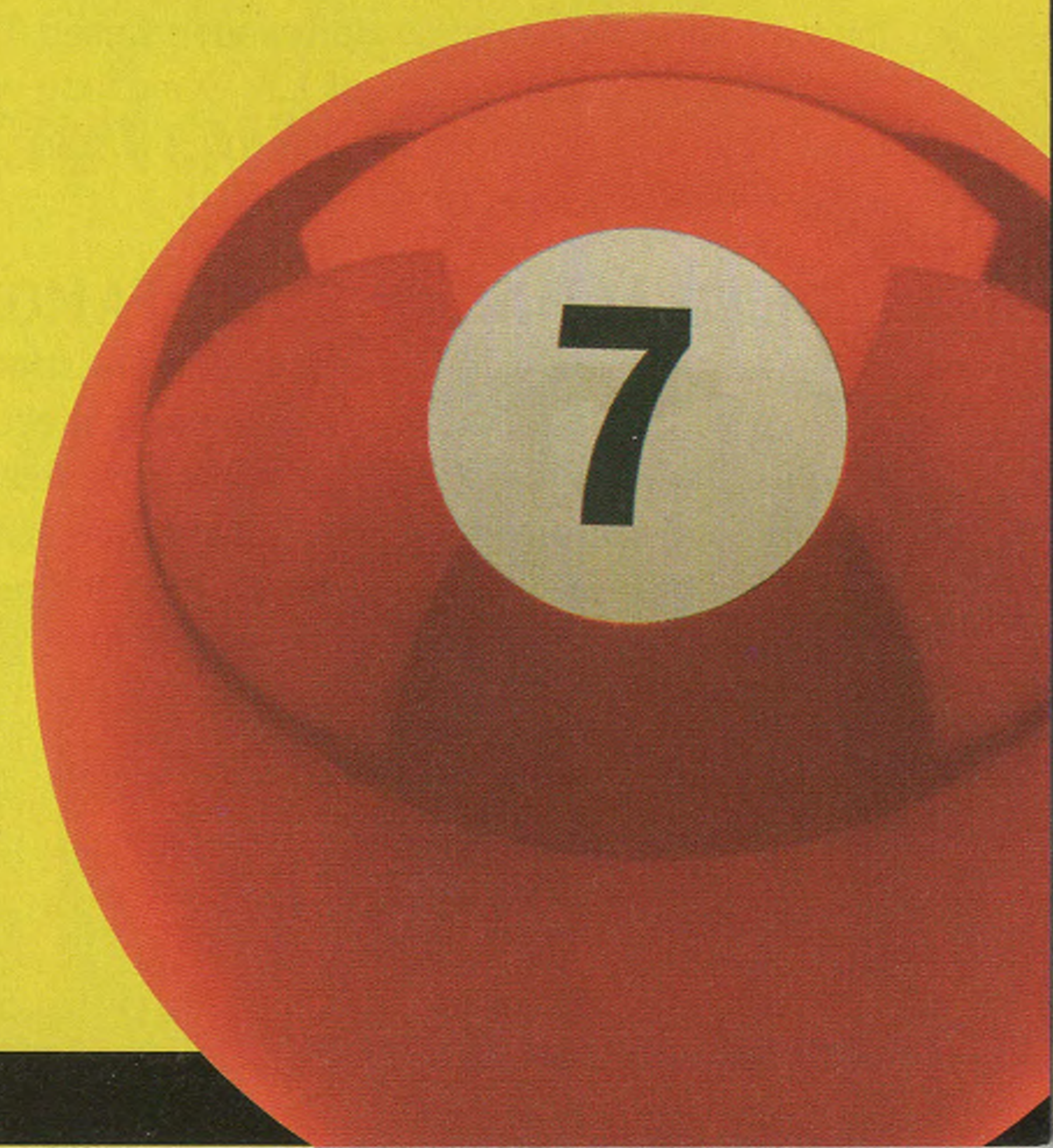


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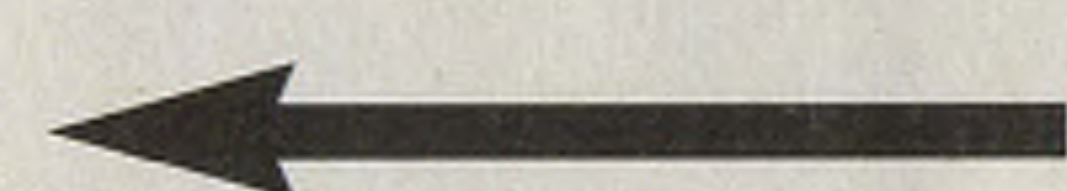
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[LINER NOTES]

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We here at 7ball thrashed the archives in search of every back issue, and here is what we found



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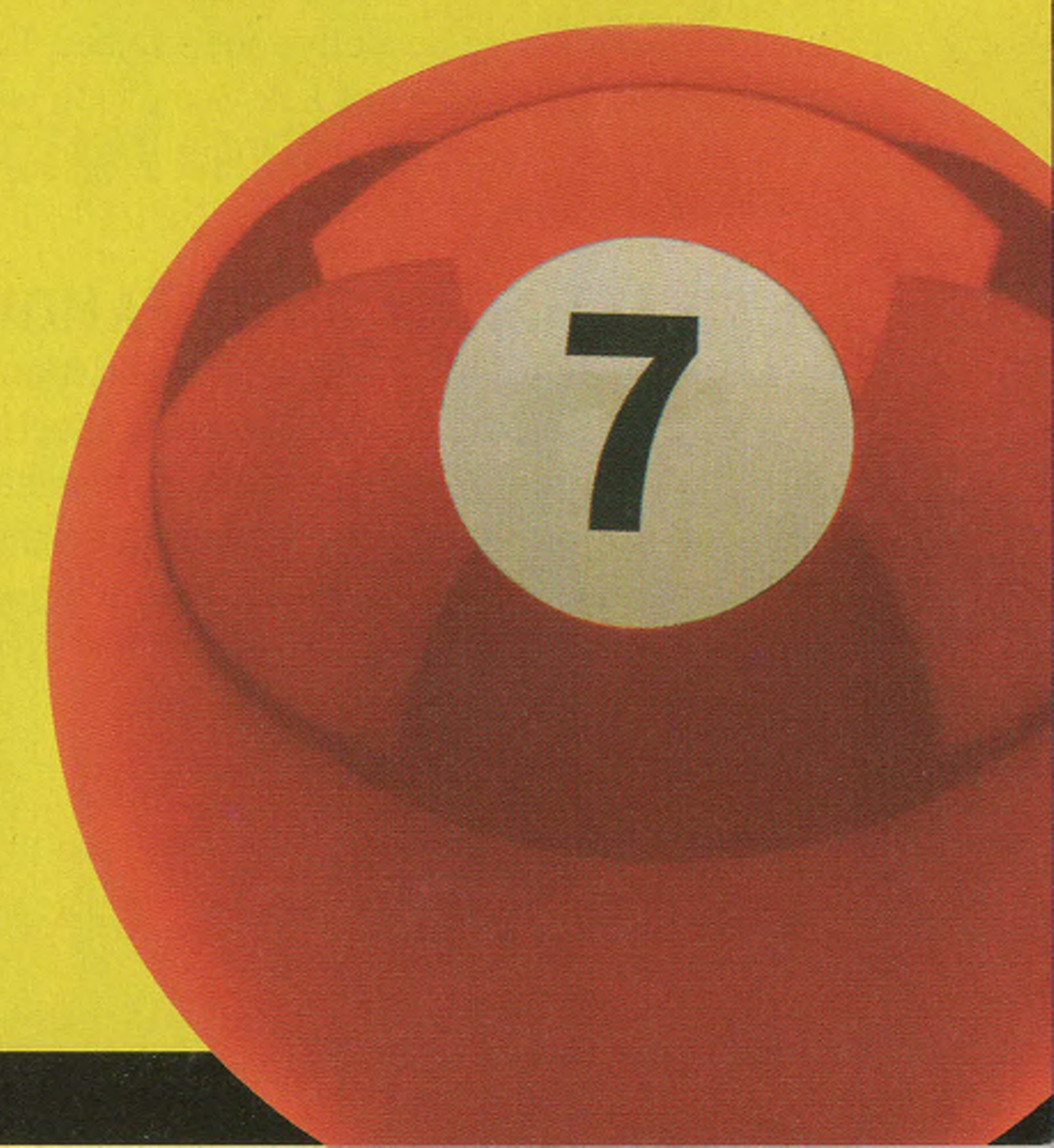
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7BALL NEWS

by Chris Well

BREAKING UP IS HARD TO DO

Those of you plugged into the 7ball email list [7ball@7ball.com] already know that **Grammatrain** broke up, **Roadside Monument** broke up, and two members left **Plankeye**.

The Grammatrain derailment comes after five years, following their festival tour. Drummer **Paul Roraback** plans to start a new group with guitarist and vocalist **Michael Blake**. **Pete Stewart** will have a solo debut sometime next year. The ex-members of Roadside Monument are also pursuing other musical interests.

Plankeye vocalist **Scott Silletta** and drummer **Adam Ferry** have left the group; Plankeye continues with the other two founding members, **Luis Garcia** and **Eric Balmer**. Ferry made the decision to leave prior to the band's spring tour, having been offered a position as the college pastor at Evangelical Free Church in Fullerton, Calif. Silletta departed from the band early in the summer, feeling that the heavy touring schedule and time away from home were becoming too burdensome. All four band members remain friends.

Balmer and Garcia, who already write the bulk of Plankeye's songs, have taken over lead vocal responsibilities. For their summer dates, **Wayne Everett** (Prayer Chain, Starflyer 59) sat in as their drummer. The band will be writing new material this fall and will start recording an album in the winter.

"We will miss Scott and Adam, and we hope our fans will give us a chance to show that we will still rock," Balmer says. "We are not giving up by any stretch on this band or this ministry."

DOWN WITH THE CRIB

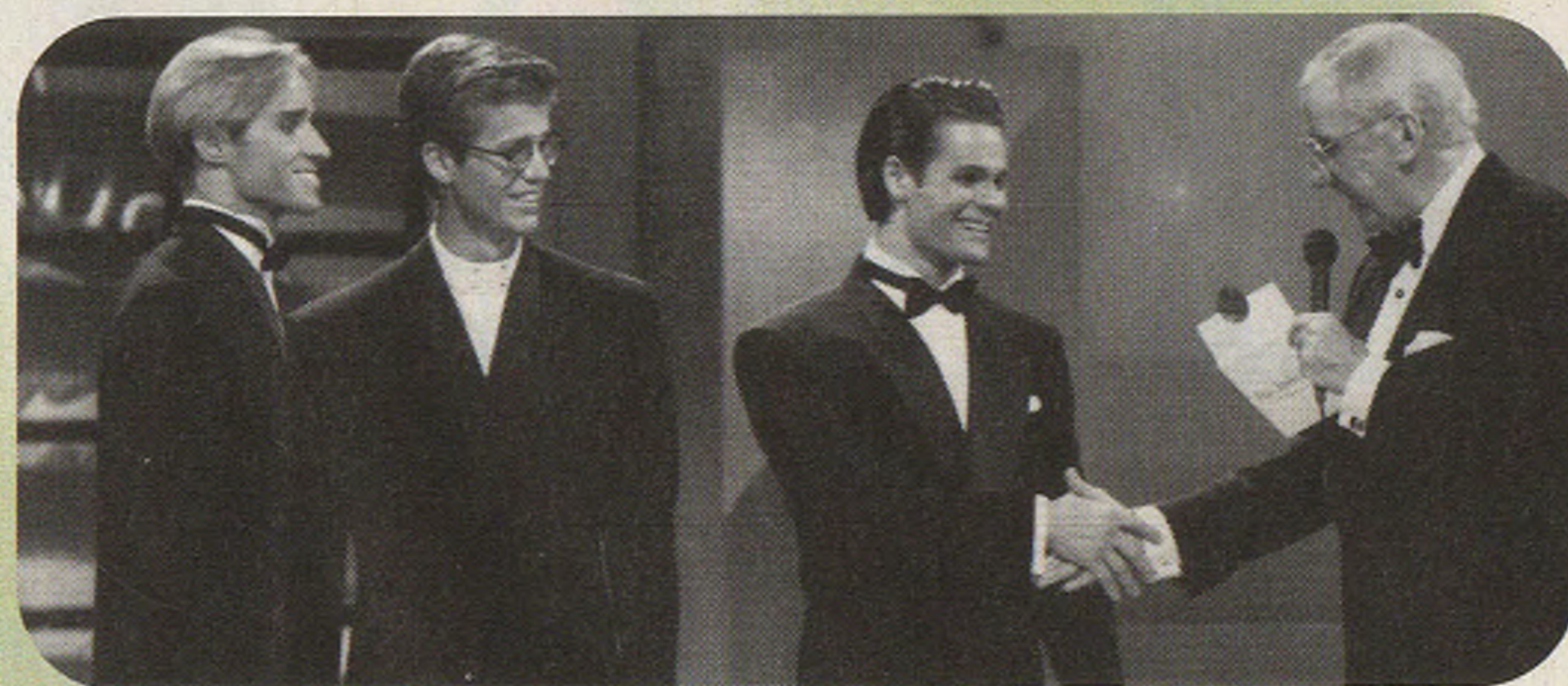
(I HAVE NO IDEA WHAT I'M TALKING ABOUT)

Have you seen commercials for the new MTV show *The Cut*? Among the many indie and underground artists featured in the numerous commercials, rapper **T-Bone** and members of the hip-hop crew **L.A. Symphony** have been included. Speaking of L.A. Symphony—a hip-hop consortium involving **Flynn**, **Brainwash Projects**, **Eternals**, **Joey Lawrence**, **Ahmad** and many others—they recently performed at Hollywood's famed The Roxy. Many of you caught a sneak peak of L.A. Symphony with the Flynn track "Sea Breeze" on last issue's 7ball CD, *Gas Collection 9* (the world digital premiere of the single!).

WE'RE ACTUALLY QUITE FAMOUS

One of the most significant bands in Christian rock history, **Daniel Amos**, is celebrated with the new collection *Our Personal Favorite World Famous Hits*. This is the first release of a projected three-volume set; additional volumes are scheduled for 1999. The modern rock band, which is as brilliant as it is fun to listen to—from their deep philosophical discussions to their

zany hijinks—has influenced the likes of **The Insyderz**, **The Choir**, **Prayer Chain**, **Rich Young Ruler** and mainstream bands **Ocean Blue** and **Collective Soul**. *Our Personal Favorite World Famous Hits* will include 22 tracks, including one previously unreleased song.



IT'S A LOUD THING

A new distribution deal for Metal Blade Records means that the latest from **Galactic Cowboys**, **King's X** and **Ty Tabor** (lead guitarist from King's X) will appear on shelves in Christian retail. Look for the two bands to tour together this fall.

WE HAVE A WINNER!

Hot on the heels of our special all-Silage news section last issue—including the frank and embarrassing admission that I lost the name of the winner of the Silage Banner contest—I received this letter:

About two issues ago I saw that contest thing for the Silage banner contest so I was really stoked because I'm into the art thing. I made this huge banner and sent it to you. I figured I lost since I didn't get a letter or anything but then I just got the new issue and to my surprise ... I won. I designed that huge speaker cabinet banner, and then I see Silage holding it. So just in case you want my name or address or something (I sent it with the banner but you said you lost it). Thanks for everything. Thanks Silage for choosing my banner. Keep up the good work.

Tyler Geertsma
Orange City, IA

A belated congrats, Tyler. For those of you who don't know, the soph Silage record, *Vegas Car Chasers*, is in stores now. Check out the Gotee Bros-produced, funkified new sound for yourself.

Thus ends another news column. To get on our email list, drop me a line at [7ball@7ball.com]. Remember, vote early and vote often!

[7ball@7ball.com]

STARFLYER 59

The Fashion Focus



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THE [DANCE] REPORT

by P.R.E.Z. —

There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven....a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance. (Ecclesiastes 3:1,4)

Dance music. Full of energy, excitement, power, emotion, intensity. It is a form of music that has been with us throughout the ages and has evolved into many variations with different meanings. For example, the pyrrhic dance, an ancient war dance performed by the Greeks, supposedly symbolized attack and defense.

But modern day dance music, full of driving bass drum beats, electronic sounds and samples, would be hardly recognizable to ancient Greeks. Yet, it's the music of major nightclubs around the country and it's making an impact on the charts.

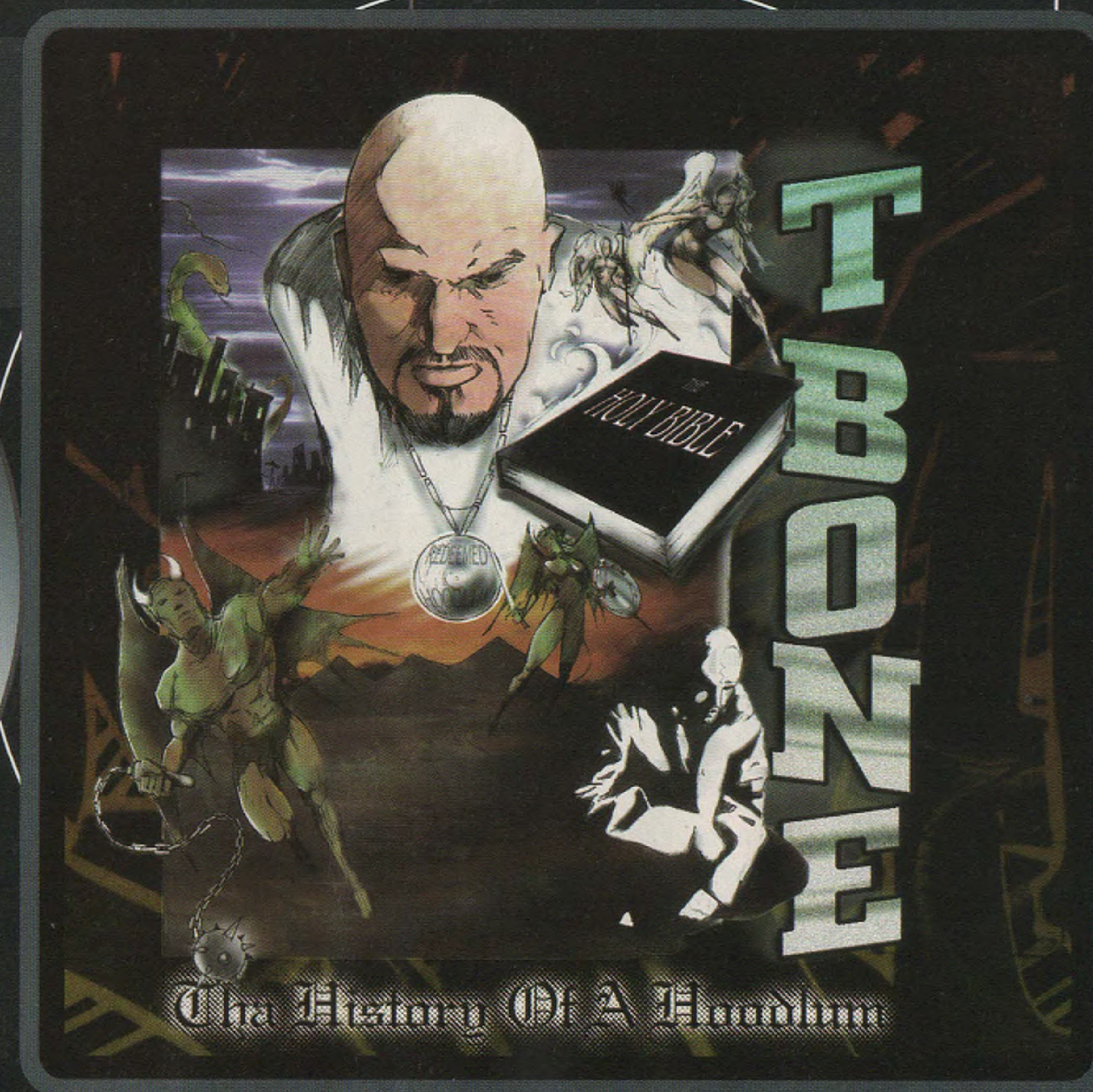
Then there's Christian dance music. Although Christian dance music is not some new phenomena—N•Soul Records, the label devoted to Christian dance music, is celebrating five years—some in the church still ask, "How can dance music glorify God?"

"They better listen to classical music," says recording artist Maximillian. "They better listen to jazz It's just absolute



THE LEGENDARY T-BONE

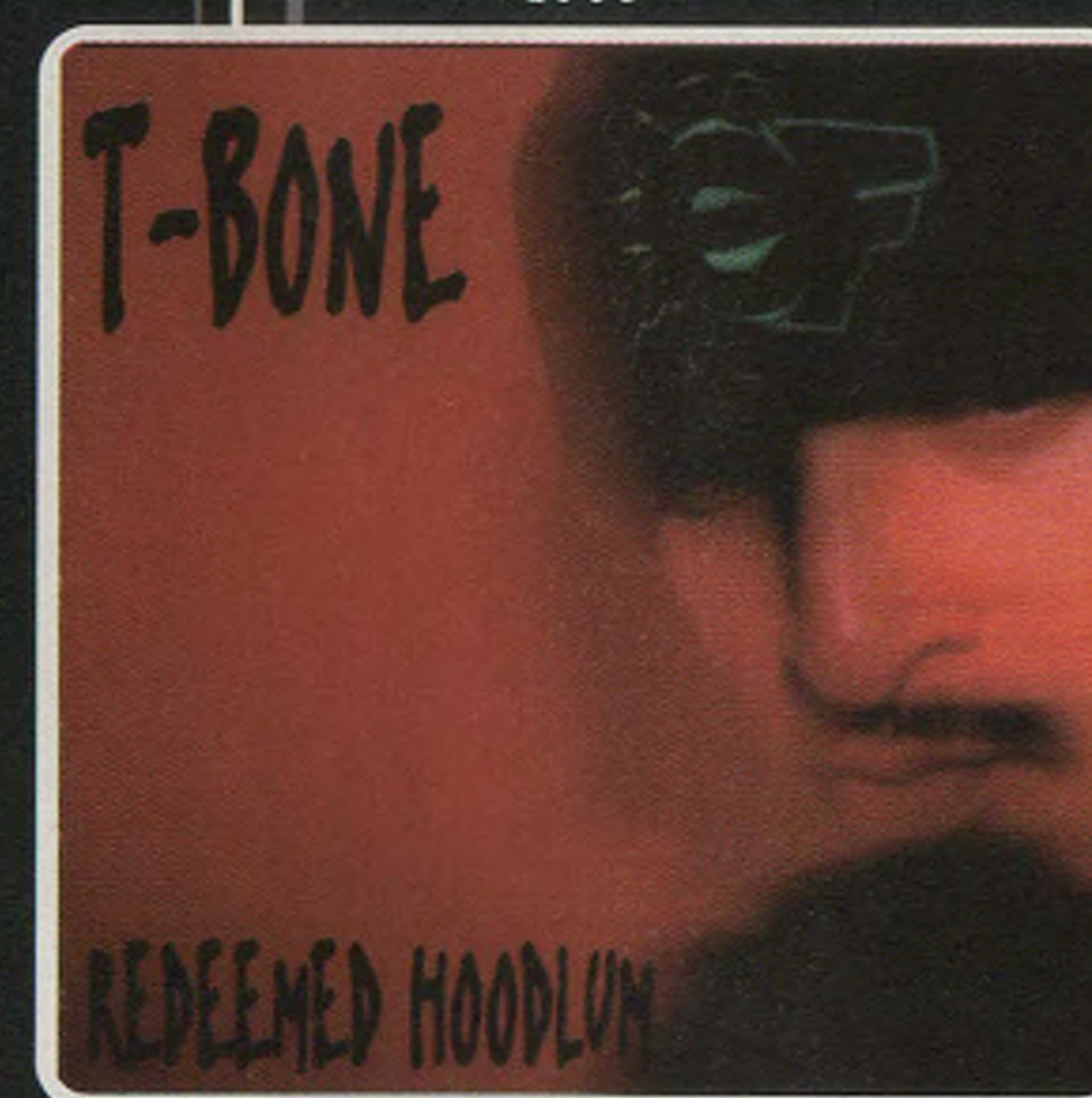
1998



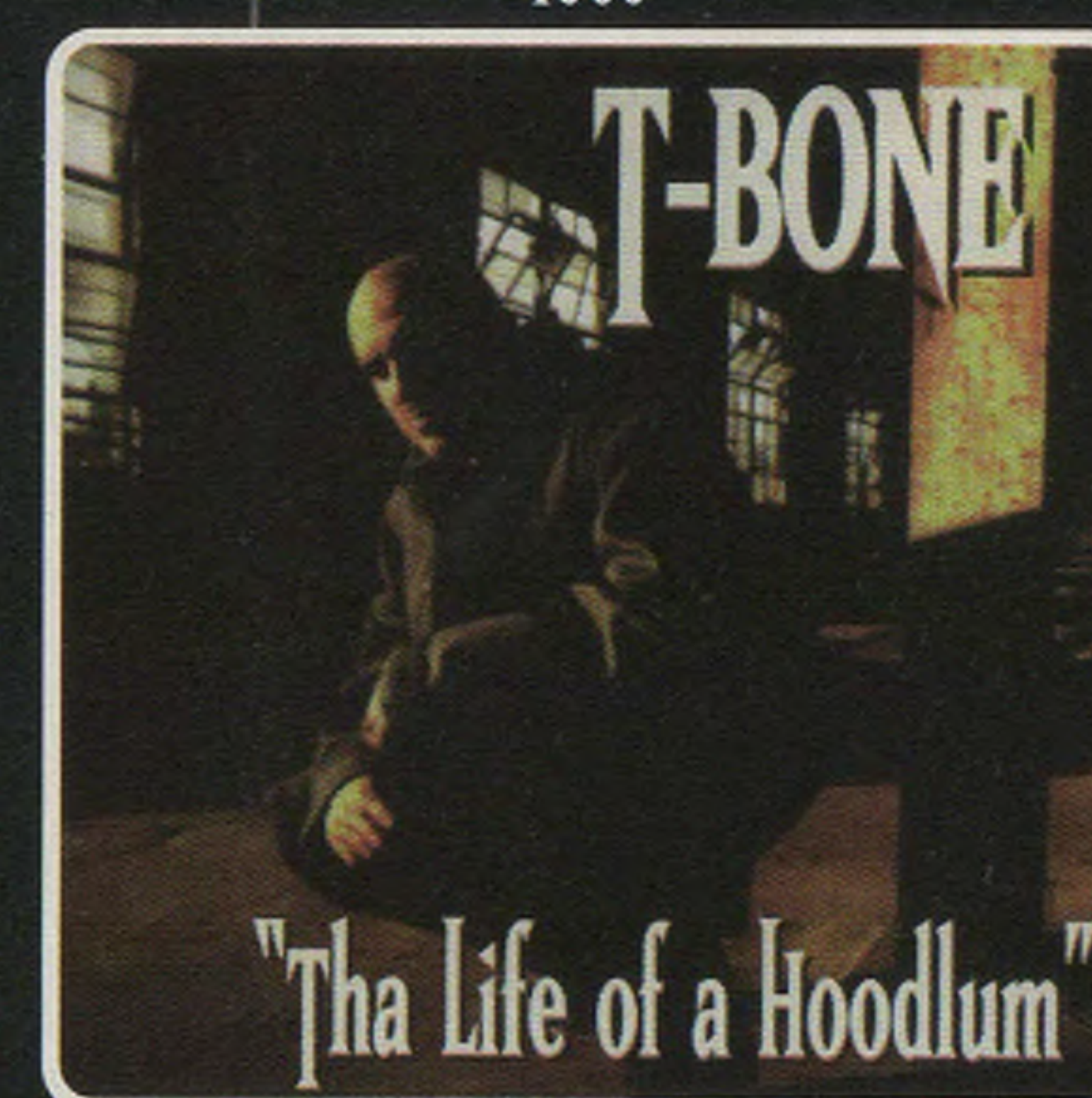
THA HISTORY OF A HOODLUM

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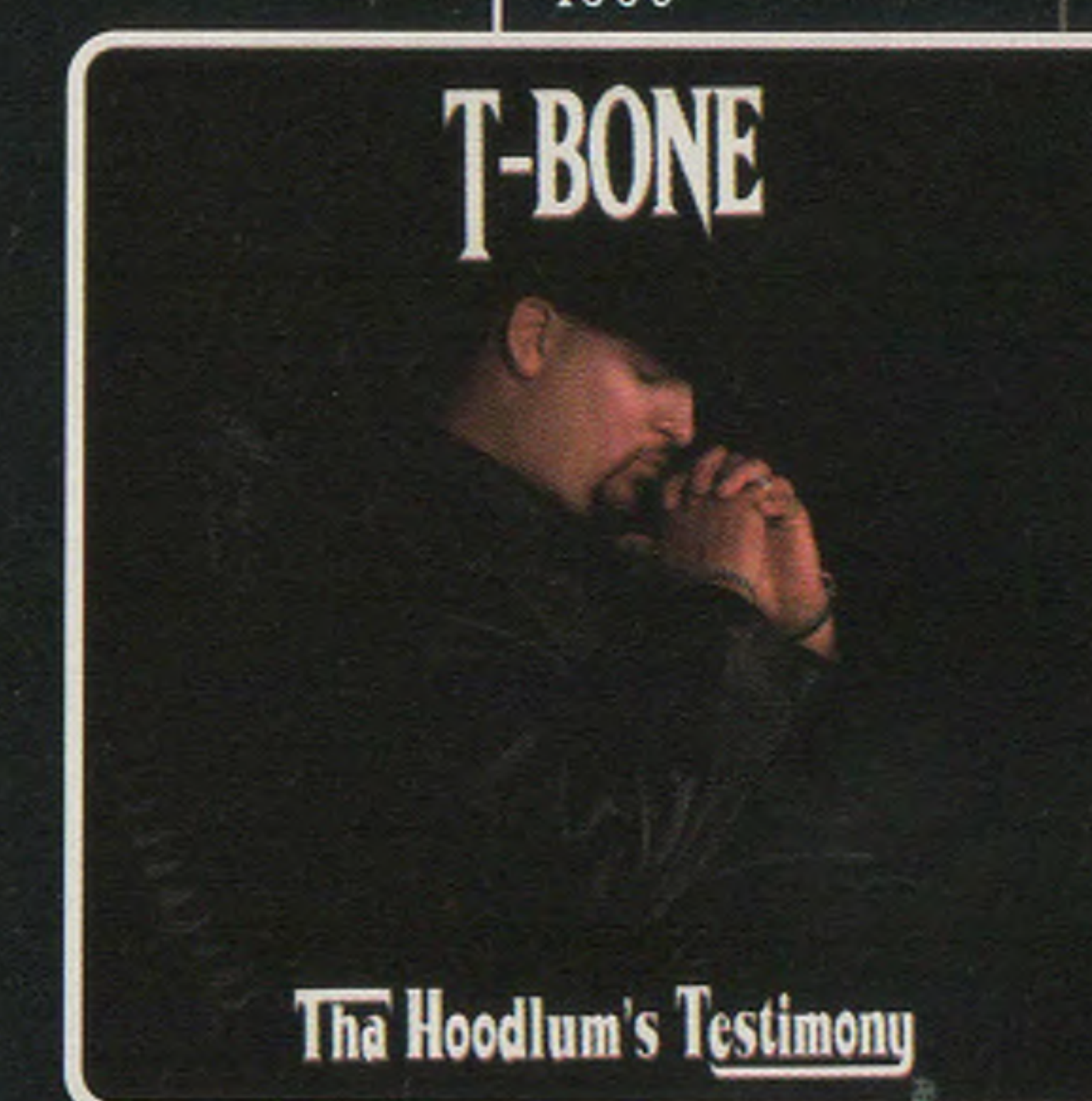
1993



1995



1996



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"Composing a dance song is very similar to classical except there is a way larger palette of instruments to work with. One of the things I miss about creating dance music is plotting the musical arrangements and the intricacies that go into making up the pieces and parts of a track."

Dance is an extremely diverse music genre. There has always been a question of what all of these different styles represent and how they can be defined. Well, for the first time in Christian history (sounds foreboding,

Scripture: doesn't it?) dance music in all of its myriad forms is going to be Praise the explained here and now. By no means are these descriptions exhaustive—these are the fundamental, bare bones definitions.

tambourine, the cymbals, the strings, the drums."

TECHNO

"Dance music in as just plain techno. Heavy on the speed (138 beats per minute and higher, with an average near 145) with electronic noises (like bleeps, toots and whistles). Voice samples throughout are common.

Eskelin, front man for All Try: Prodigal Sons, *Texno Theology*; *Return*; Cloud 2 Star United and producer of Ground, *emajin*; various, *Eclectica: An N•Soul Compilation*; Scott Blackwell, *The Real Thing*

the pop dance Praise House series. "But for the most part, it's such a lyric-based industry that if you're not talking about Jesus or saying His name somewhere, it's not going to be sold."

"It's come a long way," says producer Scott Blackwell. "There was a time where I was producing for some record companies and they didn't want to put the word dance on any of the releases."

But today, "People are seeing this music as a viable form of ministry and the fruit that it's producing is real.

There are even stores with their own dance section. The main problem now, from a market standpoint, is competition for the shelf space."

Electronic dance music, contrary to what some may think, is not just looping music segments and sequencers, letting a computer do all of the work.

Ian knows full well the detail that can go into making a song.

AMBIENT/TRIP HOP

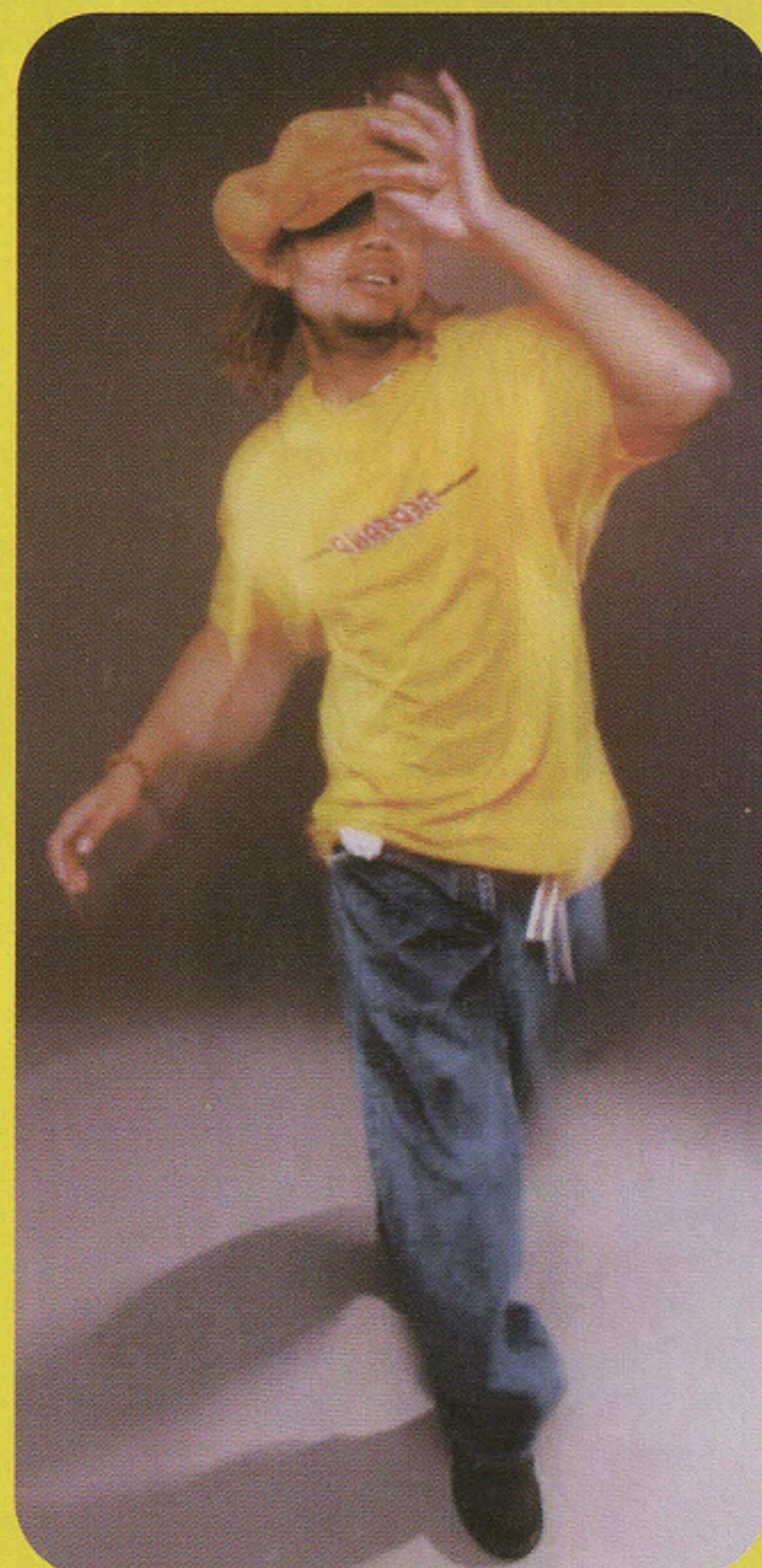
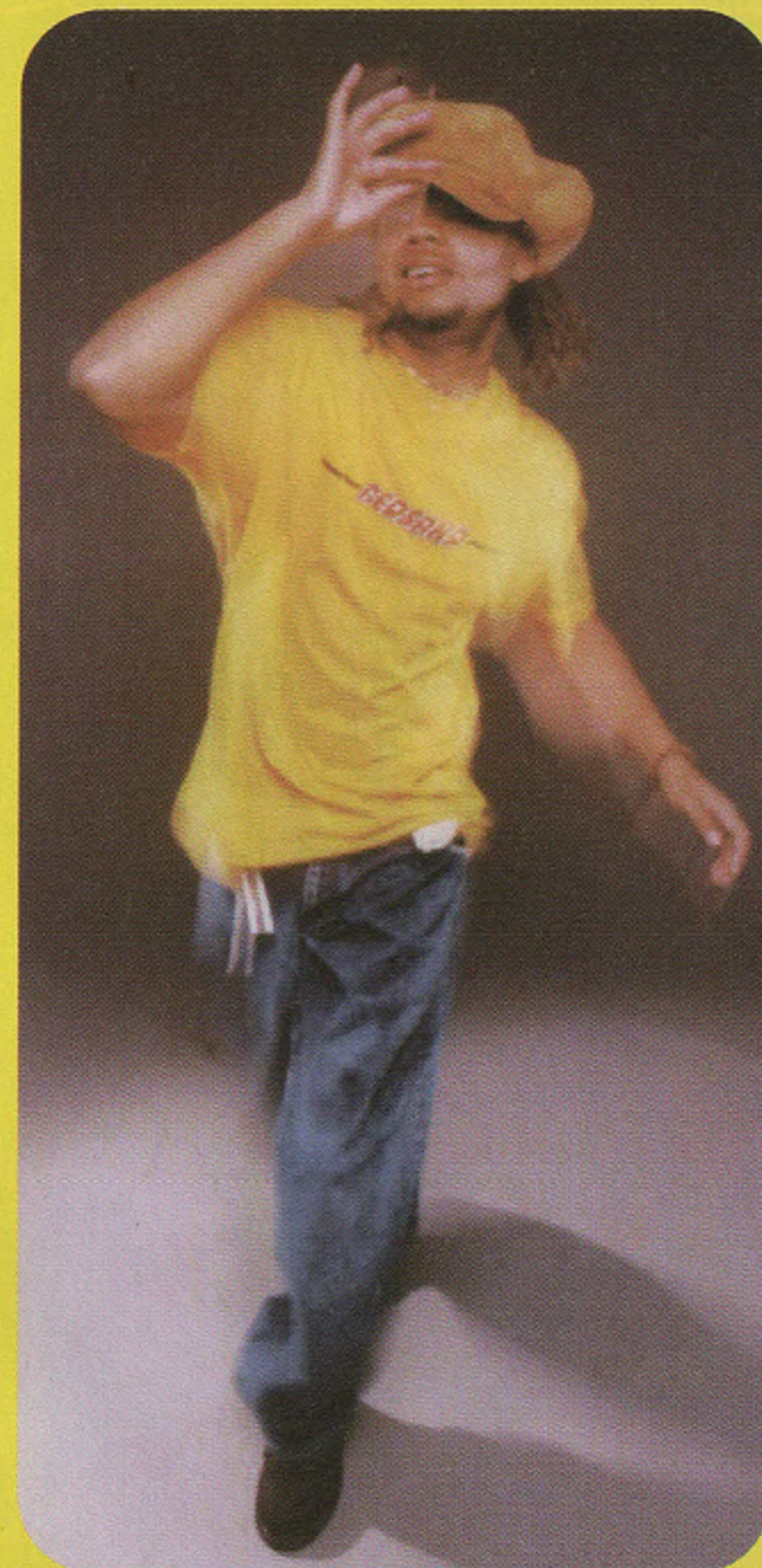
Very slow, soft, meditative music—you-can-read-your-Bible-to. There are usually no drums but a lot of strings and smooth sounds.

Try: Virus, *Ambient Theology*; *Odd*; Symbiotica, *Symbiotica*

TRIBAL/JUNGLE/DRUM AND BASS

Fast and furious music with perhaps four to five different percussive instruments flashing in and out of the track here and there. Also called hardcore or breakbeats. One of my personal favorites.

Try: *Faith Massive*; Dr. Onionskin, *Bully*



SIXPENCE NONE THE RICHER

offers a historic look at the poetic compositions that have made Sixpence None The Richer a chart-topping band and favorite of music fans around the globe.

circle of dust

Slamming Industrial/Goth Music

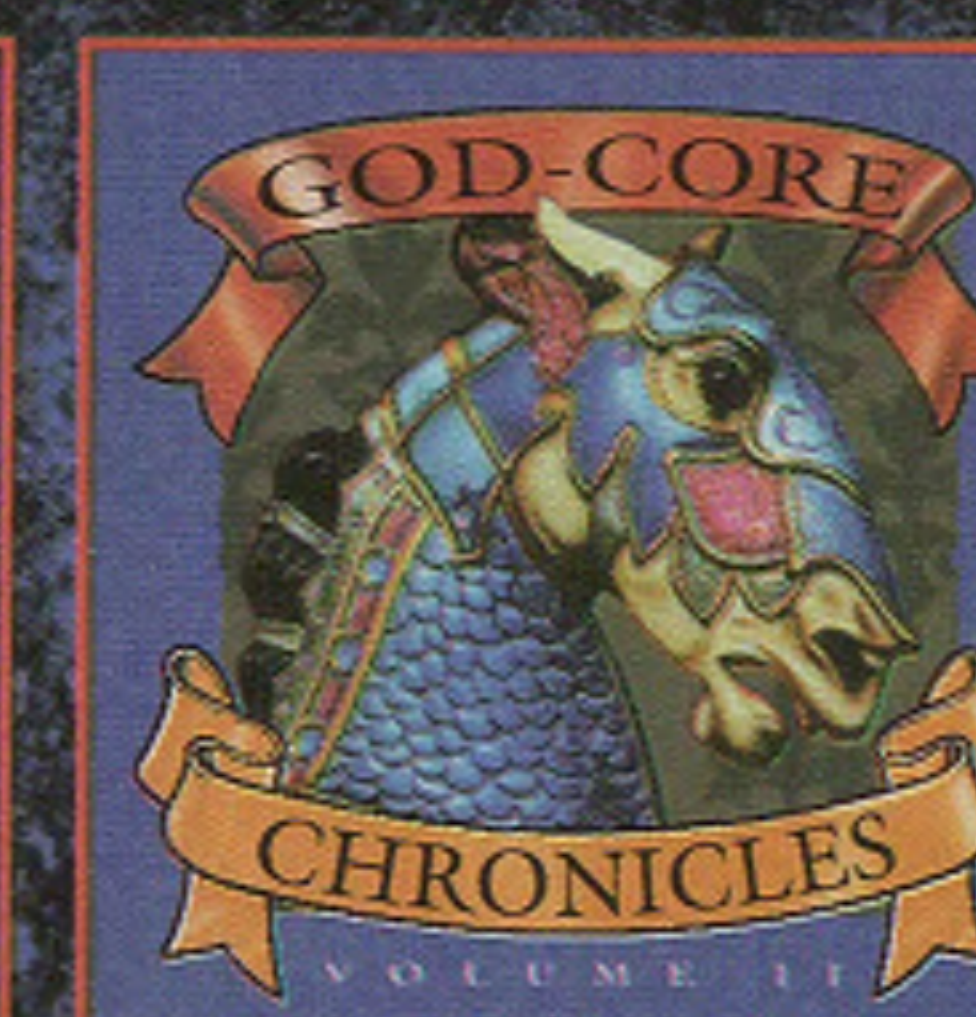
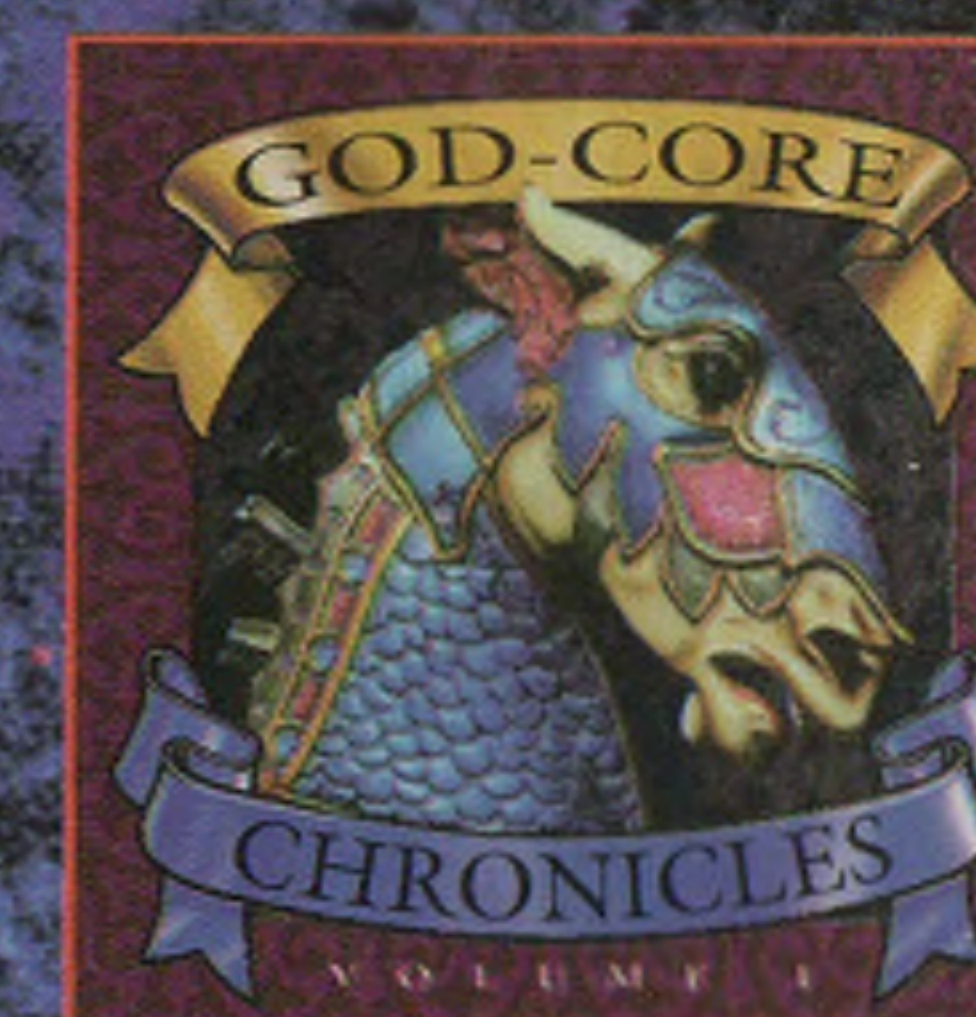


MUSIC NOT OF THIS WORLD



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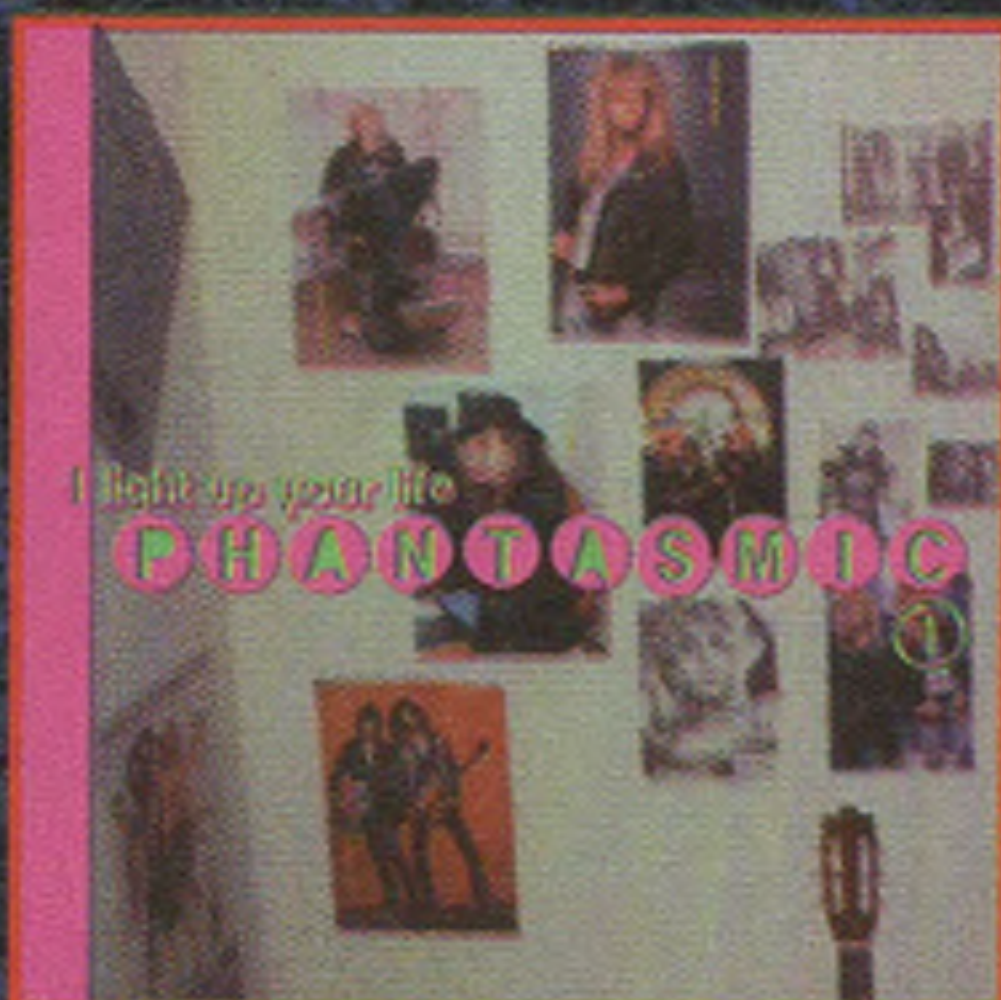
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To become more acquainted with UFM, call (610) 667-7660 or check their website [www.ufm.org].

“To say Burlap to Cashmere has the freshest, most unique sound in Christian music would do them a great disservice, because that would be too narrow a description. This is a music so fresh and vital it can only shock the world with its originality and glorify the Creator with its beauty.” - Chris Well, 7ball Magazine

“Their live show is captivating and innovative. Burlap to Cashmere is a great band.”
 - Dan Haseltine, Jars of Clay

“I am inspired and impressed with Burlap to Cashmere—their skill as musicians, their tightness as a band, and their passion to communicate the gospel with music that celebrates God and overflows with life.” - Phil Keaggy

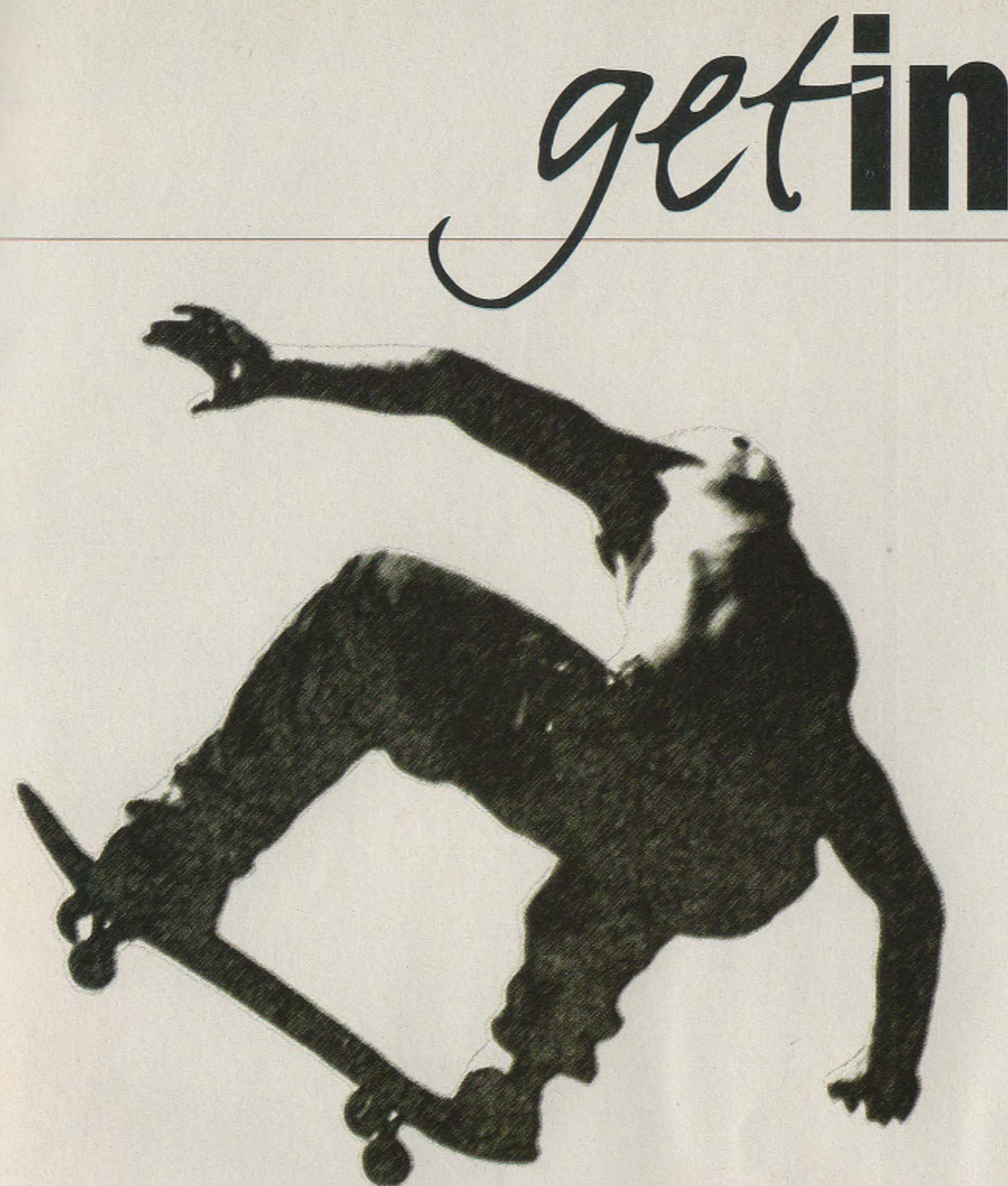
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IT'S A SWING THING

BY DEREK WALKER

The scene is a vibrant swing club smack in the middle of a big city. It's Friday night, and everyone from waitresses to businessmen line up to do the Lindy Hop and swing their blues away—blues that come from the endless routine of nine-to-five jobs and microwave dinners.

Tonight they're carefree, jitterbugging away the thoughts of their mundane lives. You're outside, catching a breath of fresh air and a quick shoe shine. As the boy works diligently on your black, fancy leather footwear, you get the feeling that this kid is a smart one. You've had a burning question on your mind for the past couple of weeks, and maybe this guy can answer it. "Hey kid," you say, "what do you know about The W's?"

He shrugs and says nothing. In this part of town, money talks. You slip him a crisp 20 dollar bill and repeat the question. Not surprisingly, he starts talking.



ons and '80s surf movies, The W's dare to shrug and grin.

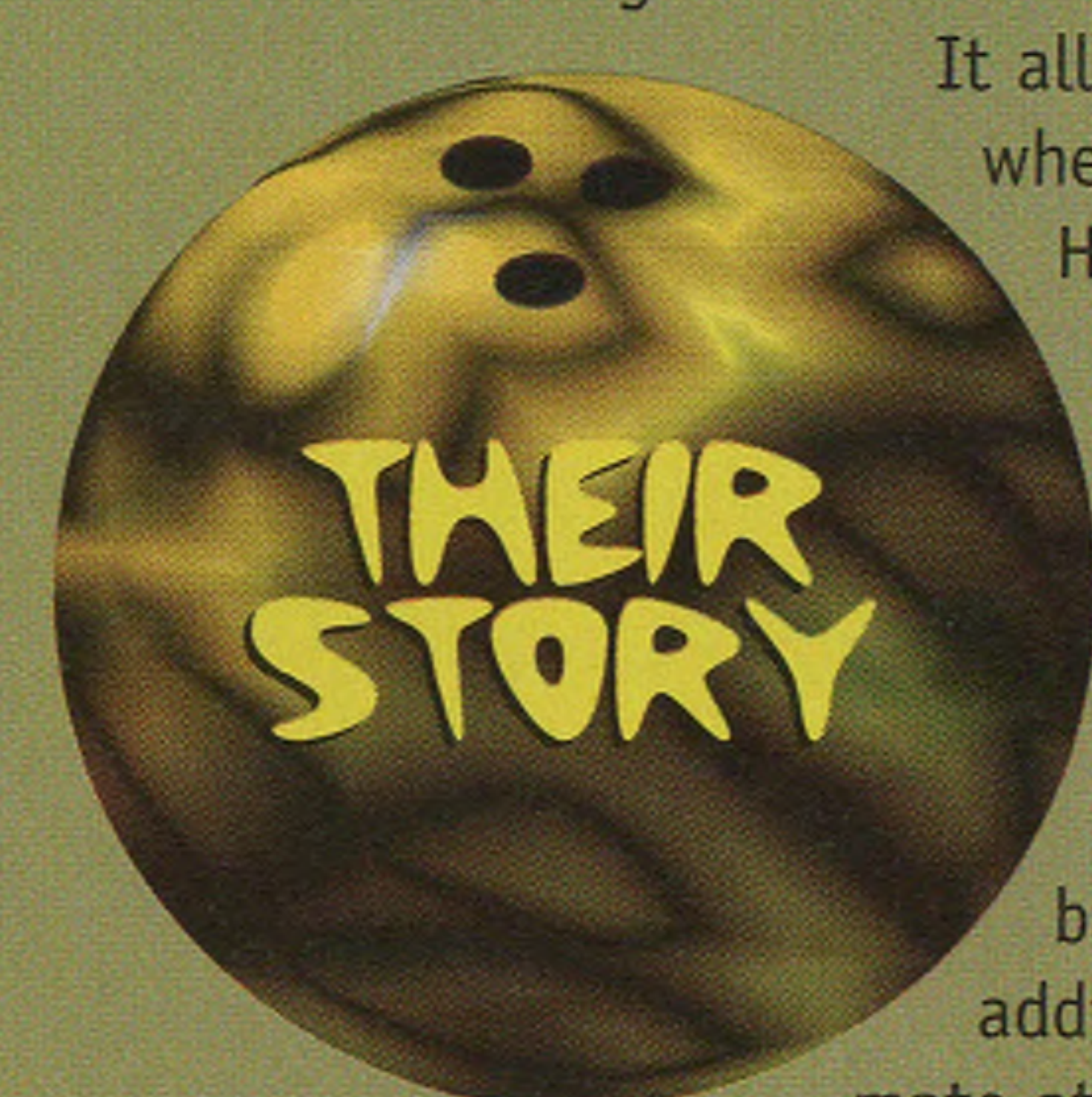
And the world is grinning with them. The W's *Fourth From The Last*, their long-anticipated debut on SaraBellum Records (a division of 5 Minute Walk), sold more than 9,000 copies its first week. That placed it at No. 4 on Billboard's "Heatseeker" chart, making it the highest debut of a Chordant Distribution project. Five weeks later, it had sold more than 31,800 copies, with no sign of slowing down. In Christian music, where new bands spring up continually and are never heard from again, success such as that of The W's is rare.

While the band was playing a local youth rally last April, lead singer and guitarist Andrew Schar had no idea how well the album would do. "I don't know what we expect, since it's our first album," Schar said. "But whatever happens is fine with us. Just the fact we get to play music is a reward in itself."

Four months later, alto sax player James Carter said the success of the album came with a bit of shock on their part. "I think it exceeded ours and everyone's expectations," he said. "We were blown away. I mean, God has blessed us with letting us be a band, so it was more of an added bonus."

Carter was at the 5 Minute Walk Records office in California, chomping at the bit to see his other bandmates so they could rehearse for an upcoming string of concerts. The six members of The W's were spread out across four states, enjoying a much-needed break before they headed off to start the El Doc tour with Five Iron Frenzy and Switchfoot in Ohio.

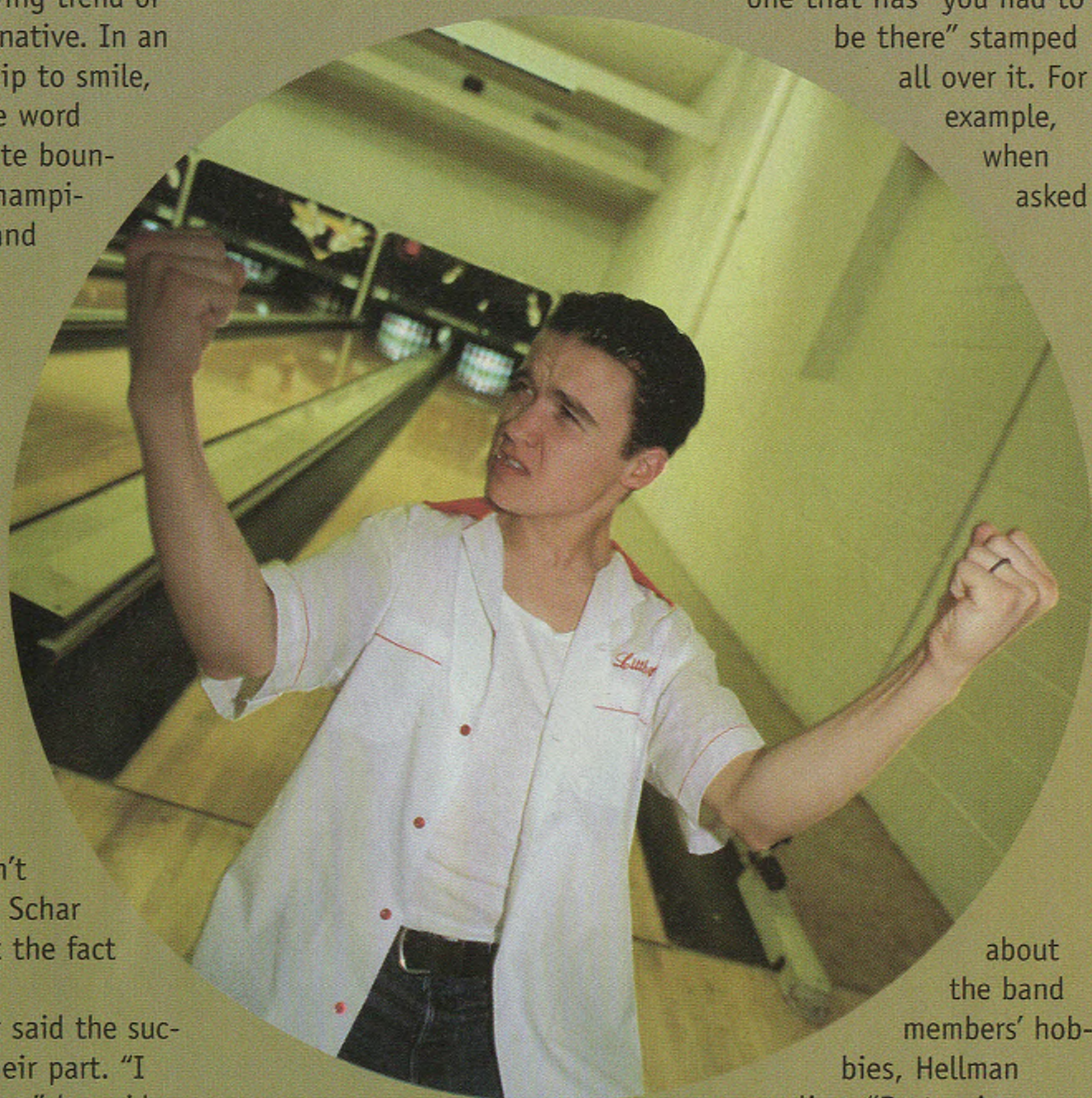
The question remains, how did six musicians (with ages ranging from 18 to 25) start a band and, less than a year later, find themselves touring full-time?



It all began in the summer of 1997, when tenor saxman Valentino Hellman, bassist Todd Gruener and Schar began playing together at Oregon State University with various drummers. On a summer trip to Santa Cruz, Schar met Brett Barker, who soon joined the band as a trumpet player. The addition of Carter (Schar's roommate at the time) made the horn section complete. After a revolving cast of drummers, Brian Morris (who had previously been in a local punk band) signed on for

good, solidifying the rhythm section. "Since Andrew, Todd and I are the original members," Hellman says, "the others are considered hired-out musicians. Brian was paid a box of macaroni and cheese, James was paid a stick of gum and Brett was paid a red rubber ball."

(Talking to the band is like being in on a huge inside joke, one that has "you had to be there" stamped all over it. For example, when asked



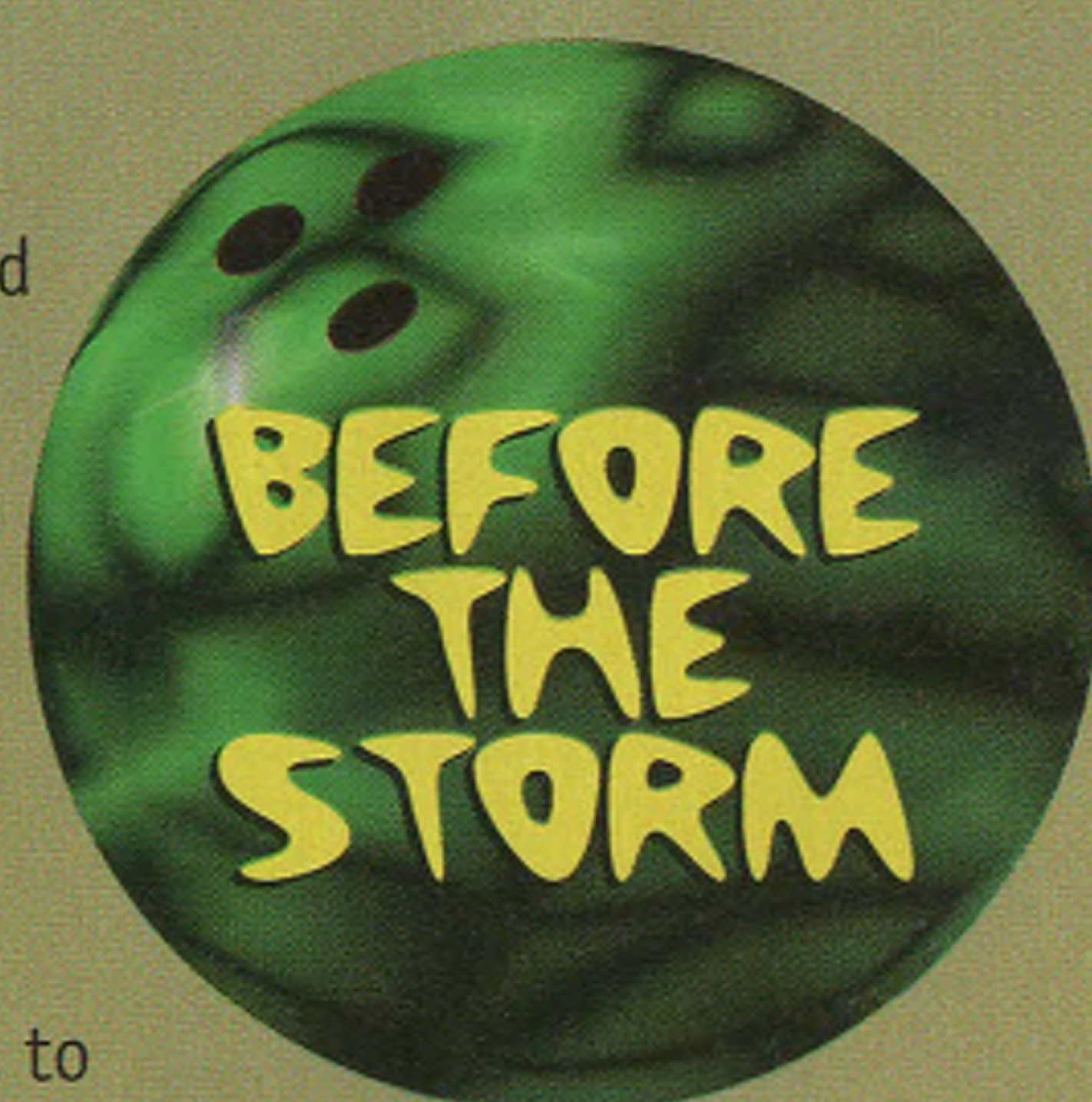
about the band members' hobbies, Hellman replies: "Bret enjoys

counting trees, Todd enjoys playing punk rock, James enjoys shoveling bark dust, Brian enjoys taming wild beasts and Andrew enjoys combing his hair. I have no hobbies. I'm an android.")

The six members in place, they began playing local shows at churches and small pizza places—and started making a name for themselves. A local radio station let them record a demo in their studio at no cost. Little did the band know the impact that would have.

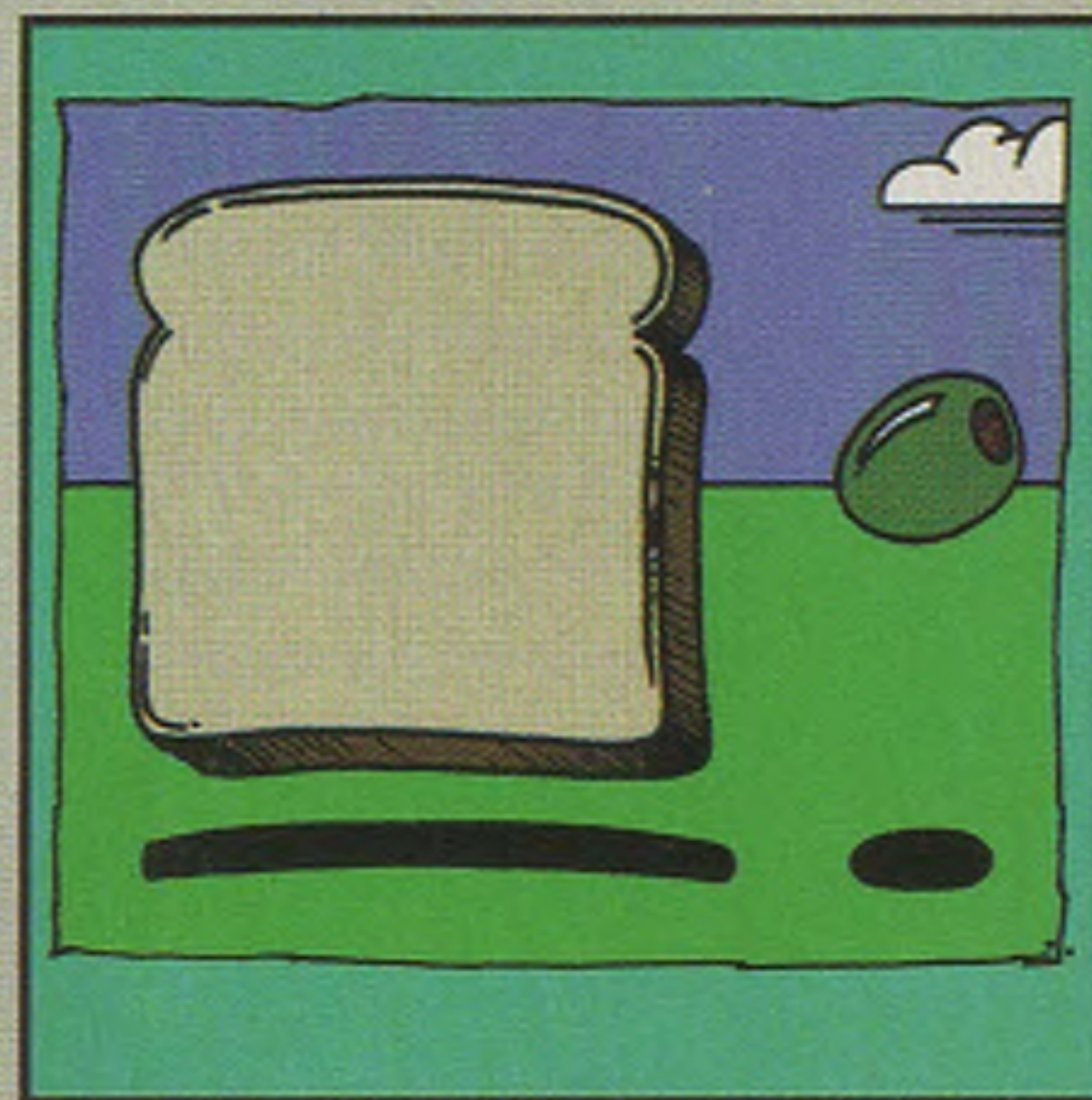
The W's got their big break in November 1997 when they opened for Five Iron Frenzy at the record release party for *Our Newest Album Ever*. They were booked on word-of-mouth credentials after another band unexpectedly dropped out. "To tell you the truth," says Frank Tate, head of 5 Minute Walk, "I didn't know what to expect. But they ended up being really fun on stage, and I saw a lot of potential."

A curious crowd gathered around the edge of the stage to witness the (then) unheard-of band with the unusual name. As they ripped into an awkward-yet-infectious early version of "The Devil Is Bad," the crowd forsook their urge to mosh;



"THE ONLY 'FUTUR-SONIC' RAIL-LINE WITH DAILY SCHEDULED NONSTOPS TO THE FUTURE!"

T~8.



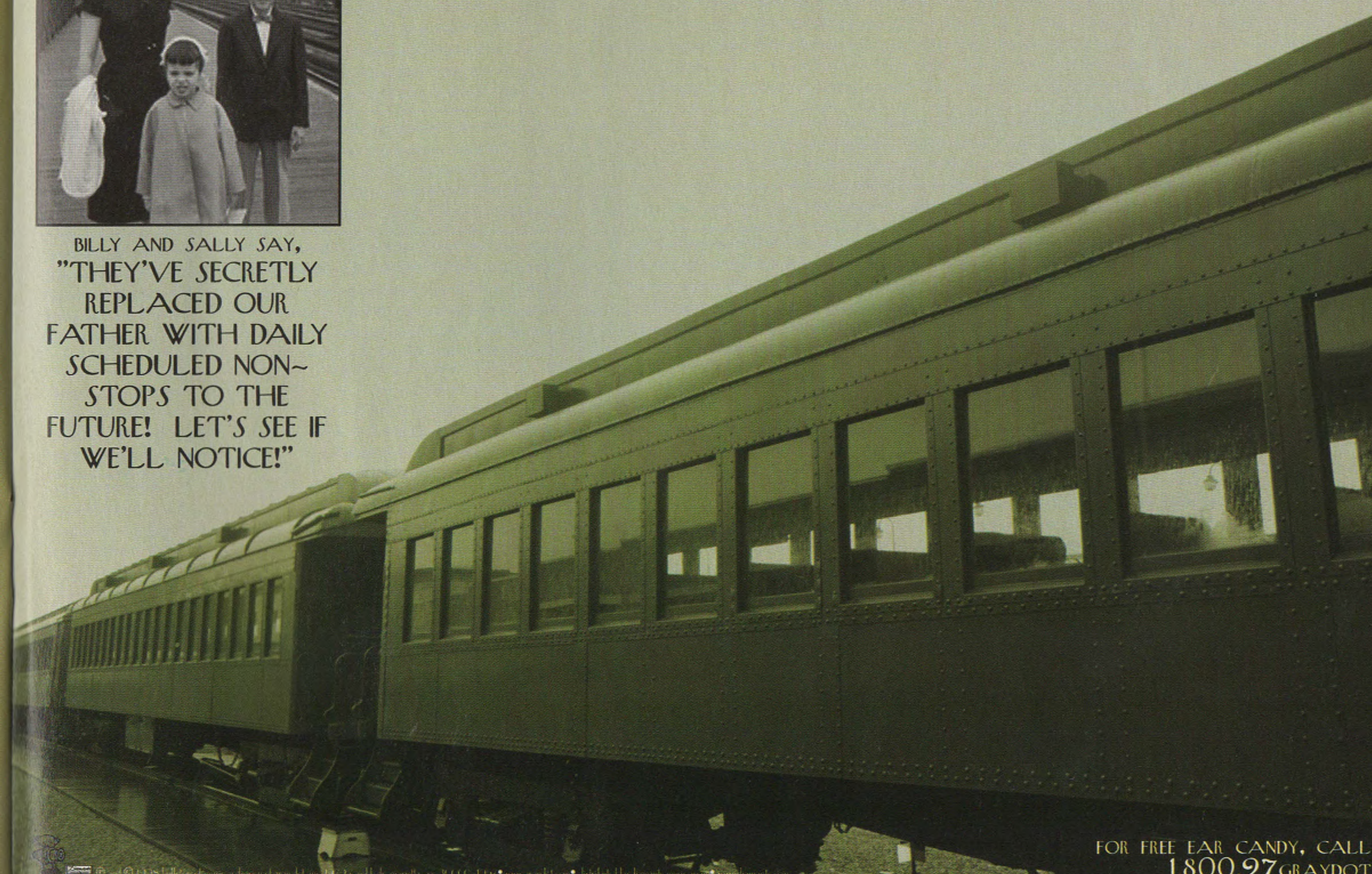
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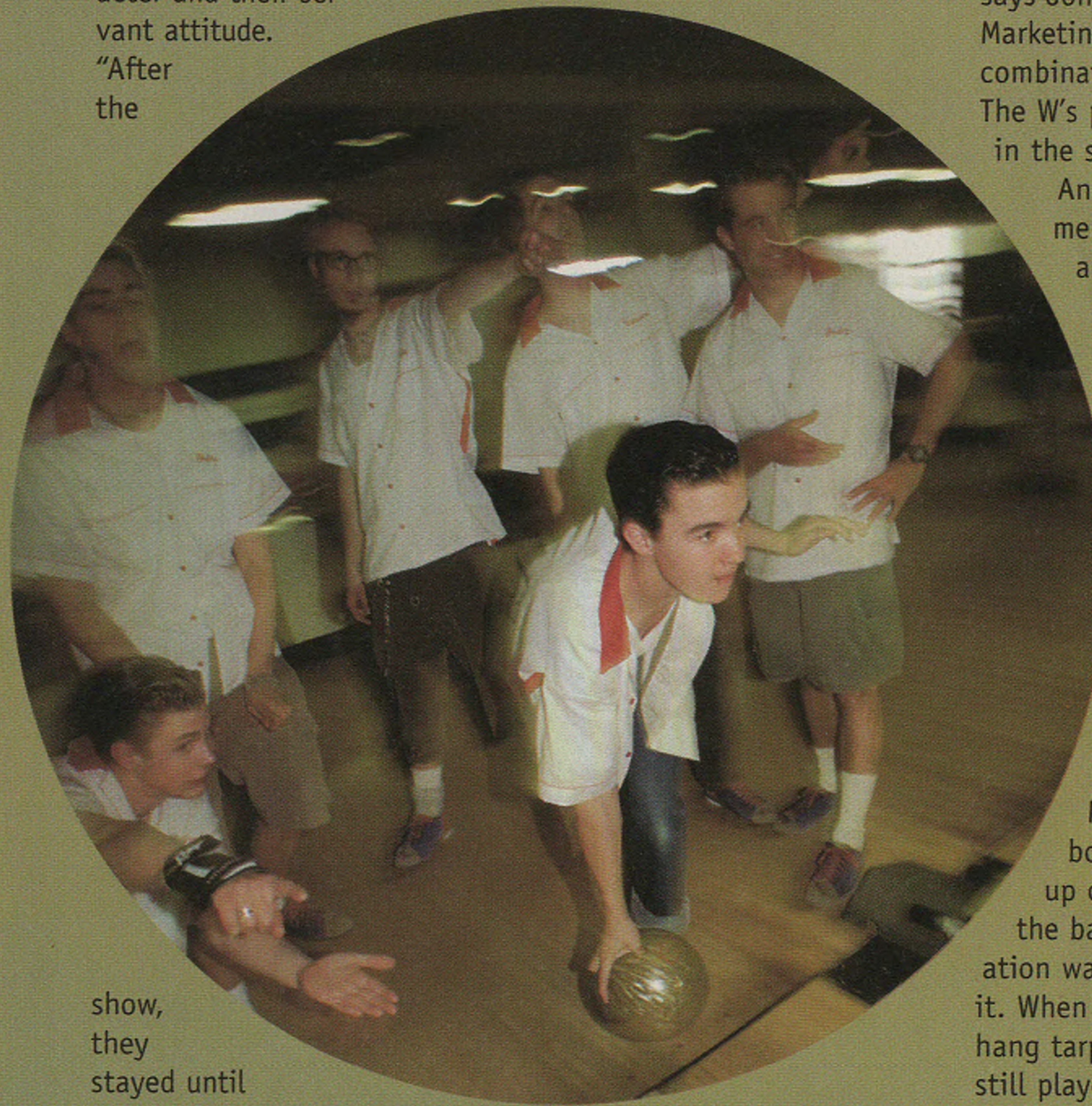


BILLY AND SALLY SAY,
"THEY'VE SECRETLY REPLACED OUR FATHER WITH DAILY SCHEDULED NON~STOPS TO THE FUTURE! LET'S SEE IF WE'LL NOTICE!"



instead, a more charming combination of skanking and swing dancing swept over the audience. "I remember finishing our set," Carter recalls, "and walking off stage and someone from 5 Minute Walk asked us if we'd like to play one more song. We just shook our heads and said, *Ummmm ... nope*. Seriously, we had spent so much time rehearsing the same songs for our set that we didn't have any other songs."

For Tate, what pleases him most about the band is their character and their servant attitude. "After the



show, they stayed until midnight. I walked into the bathroom and they were on their hands and knees, cleaning the floor."

Fast forward seven months to 5 Minute Walk's annual Mama Liana Fest in May 1998. Same venue (a church in Northern California), same size crowd, same headlining band (Five Iron Frenzy); but this time, The W's took the stage with confidence.

They astonish the crowd with an energetic version of "The Devil Is Bad," and it doesn't take a genius to see why. As Gruener (decked out in a mock Santa Claus beard) bounces around the stage with the energy of a pinball, Schar shuffles, winking at the crowd and belting out his lyrics in his snazzy, showman voice. The horn section bops in time, and Morris moves along with them, oblivious grin on his face. As they flawlessly pound the song out, the crowd sings along. They know every word—and the album still hasn't been released.

It helps that swing and neo-swing is heating up in the general market. Hellman notes how far swing's grip has reached: "We played this one show, where an hour before we were to go on, everyone took a swing dancing lesson. It was cool. I'd be playing and watching the crowd, and every once in a while some couple would do a flip or a cool move, and I'd be so surprised that I'd miss a note or two. Watching people get into it was really exciting."

Something that contributed to the advance buzz was the inclusion of "The Devil Is Bad" on such compilations as The GAS Collection and Chordant Distribution's *Simply X-cellent Summer Sampler*. "We tried to get a wide variety of music that we thought the kids would like," says John Nardini, VP of Marketing for Chordant. "The combination of the style of music The W's play and what was going on in the secular marketplace was perfect."

Another thing that's added to W's mania is how the members spent their summer vacation—touring. Playing a seemingly endless list of summer festivals and concerts, they won fans over with their lively sets, goofy personalities and willingness to hang out with concertgoers. "The festivals are cool because you can talk with fans afterward for a while instead of having to pack up and leave that night," Carter says. "At the beginning of the festivals, we'd be hanging out with people who had no idea of who we were; they were just hanging out with us. I'd ask them what band they wanted to see play and they'd say, I want to see The W's. I mean, they didn't even know I was in the band and they were saying that."

The smaller shows also gained them some fans. Mike Alexander, a youth minister in Livermore, Calif., booked The W's for a city-wide youth rally that was set up on a blocked-off street. He, too, was impressed with the band. "They weren't really worried about what the situation was," Alexander says. "They were just ready to go with it. When it started raining, we had to modify the stage and hang tarps, which gave them even less stage room. But they still played a great set, and it was fun and really relevant."

As the night slowly fades and melts from the memories of those who reveled in it, the mystery has been solved. You exit the club the same way you entered; nothing has really changed about you. Or has it? There's a bit of a spring in your step, and the tune of "The Devil Is Bad" rowdily barges in your head, refusing to leave. Indeed, The W's have arrived, and they've been embraced with a fervor that has everyone, including seasoned veterans, shaking their heads and thinking to themselves, Where did these guys come from?

Creating music that is both timeless and cutting-edge, making the thinkers think and the dancers dance, The W's have carved themselves a niche that others are sure to follow.

"I hope people are having fun, and it's encouraging and uplifting to see that happen," Carter says. "To tell you the truth, anything's possible. At our next concert, hardly anyone could show up. But if only five people came, we'd get to hang out with them and play music, and that's what counts." 7



EPILOGUE



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10/23 Panama City, FL
10/26 Frankfort, KY
10/27 Kent, OH
10/29 Conway, AR
10/30 Clinton, MS
10/31 N. Manchester, IN
11/01 Burlington, IA
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11/05 Iowa City, IA
11/06 Duluth, MN

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11/10 Erie, PA
11/12 Grantham, PA
11/13 Dayton, OH
11/14 Kankakee, IL
11/15 Columbia, MO
11/17 Terre Haute, IN
11/19 Kennesaw, GA
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photography by Charley Stephens

The STARFLYER EVOLUTION



by J. Edward Keyes

There are sirens in the background. They are audible on the phone, shrieking into and out of earshot in the Irvine, Calif., air where Jason Martin is dodging questions like bullets from the gun that may have caused this disturbance. He has been asked about the philosophy behind *The Fashion Focus*, Starflyer's fourth and most accomplished work to date. Martin

time, I was like, *Oh, man, this is so epic, man ... all this feedback ... these guys are just rockin'.*"

Martin couldn't contain his enthusiasm, and started sharing the records with a classmate he had befriended named Jeff Cloud (whom he affectionately describes as a dumb Led Zeppelin kid he had to transform). "We started going to a lot of

Unfortunately, fan reaction began to fluctuate with each release. The hushed tone of Starflyer's hotly anticipated *Gold* record caught many off guard, and the heavy-metal vibe of *Americana* distanced more still. "Every time we do a record, the kids always talk about the previous record like, *Oh, you really hit it then.* When we put out the *Gold* album, people

With fewer overdriven guitars, in favor of melodies and vocals, Jason Martin makes his biggest musical gamble yet

hates questions like this, hates the sort of arty pretension they imply. He would much rather talk about The Smiths, a band he's referenced no fewer than half a dozen times in the conversation thus far. He would rather talk about chords and melody, the love of which sustains him in the dry spells between records.

But he hasn't been asked about The Smiths, and he hasn't been asked about chords; he's been asked about philosophy. He sighs, unwilling to relent. "If this thing comes out and I sound all flowery and artistic, I'm gonna throw up. Please don't make me sound like some art guy."

He's easy to picture, on the phone in his front yard in Irvine, just 60 miles away from Riverside, where he spent his teen years. He's undoubtedly rolling his eyes, arms folded across any one of the seemingly infinite number of striped shirts he dons in publicity shots and album inserts.

Martin has lived in California his entire life, growing up alongside his equally musical brother, Ronnie, in a home where secular music was taboo and children went to Christian school to prevent "humanism from being pumped into [them]."

It was during their teen years that Ronnie and Jason fell in love with Daniel Amos, 4-4-1 and L.S.U., artists who would eventually propel Jason to seek out music on what he jokingly calls "the dark side." "I would go to my friend's house, and he would have [The Smiths'] *The Queen is Dead* and I just could not handle how much I loved that thing," he laughs wryly.

From there it was a short leap to other British bands like New Order, Ride and My Bloody Valentine, all of which Martin voraciously devoured and meticulously studied. "Early Ride was one of my biggest influences," he says. "At the

shows in Hollywood," he remembers. "We saw Blur and the Charlatans. We used to go to shows like twice a week."

Cloud and Martin began making music together as teens. Rumor has it there are early Starflyer demos with Cloud singing, a role Jason grudgingly claimed for himself. Years later, when bass player Eric Campuzano quit the band right before the *Americana* tour, it was Cloud who stepped in.

It becomes clear in a matter of seconds that Jason Martin is in love with music. Not some vague, high-falutin' notion of creativity or artistic integrity, but what he matter-of-factly refers to as "the math of it all, which verse leads naturally into the chorus, things like that."

He disgustingly eschews vogue snooty posturing. He mocks the image of the morose, brooding misfit that fans and press have created for him. "It's not like I am such an outsider and my art is the only way I can survive," he laughs.

In part, Martin has himself to blame for public perception. When Starflyer's debut was released back in 1994, Martin's voice was buried behind sludgy layers of guitar, barely audible, never cracking a whisper. "As little as I sing now, I was really scared back then," he offers by way of explanation. "Plus, the bands I was listening to at the time, none of them really knew how to sing either. So you had some big quadra-reverb massacre with a guy whispering in the background."

So unique was Starflyer's debut that it instantly grabbed people by the throat and the weeks following its release were the only time Martin says he ever really felt famous. "We went to Cornerstone, and I had kids come up and talk to me and knew who I was, and I was all, *Wow.*"

said, *Oh, man, I don't really like that stuff.* Then we put out *Americana*, and the kids were like, *Oh, dude, the Gold album is my favorite.* And I [would say], *Really? Because it wasn't a year ago.*"

Martin doesn't just tell how a conversation went, he acts it out, adopting different voices for the different characters. The fan's voices are always nestled in a hoarse, awed whisper. The artists sound like Shakespearean rejects, their voices lofty and lilting. Martin's own voice is no-nonsense, curt and winsome.

Despite all the legends about Martin being inaccessible and distant, he proves remarkably funny, down to earth and willing to speak his mind (though he frequently precedes his more insightful statements with a defensive, "Oh, I don't know"). His humor is a vintage dry California sarcasm, slow and calculated, like Denis Leary on dramamine. "I don't know," he says. "Maybe with the release of *The Fashion Focus*, *Americana* will suddenly become the bomb."

This record is perhaps Martin's biggest gamble thus far. Without flinching, he has taken a razor to everything that Starflyer has become known for, scraping away the over-driven guitar, cutting down to the bare bones of the song. Martin's vocals are pushed to the front of the mix, dry and defiant. Plinking keyboards appropriate the melody, shoving guitars into the wings, refusing to allow the songs to cop-out and surrender melody for volume.

Simply put, it sounds like nothing else Starflyer has ever done. Play the title track right after "Housewife Love Song," and the differences are immediately obvious. Even when Martin does relent and allow the guitars to dominate, their time in the foreground is limited.

"We're the Ordinary" explodes with only seconds remaining and "Fell In Love At

22" is a somber prom-night ballad, Martin's croon cracking over melancholy keyboard. "It's just a different batch of songs," Martin explains with a non-committal air. "I wanted a record that had a lot of different stuff. We tried to spend a lot of time on melody and vocals, as opposed to hiding behind guitar. Hopefully it's a more accessible record."

The *Fashion Focus* announces Martin's arrival as a gifted songwriter with "I Drive A Lot," an uptempo tribute to his day job as a truck driver. "I Drive A Lot" is the truest song I've ever written," he

idol before me, and, I'll confess, it is sometimes. We don't make the world go round. We don't really matter. Our hope should be in the coming of Jesus Christ, not the coming of the new Starflyer record, but we get so caught up ..." his voice trails off. As if struck by sudden inspiration, he shouts, "This is a magazine interview! I'm just promoting the sickness!" He punctuates the sentence with a groan and a laugh.

"It's just a couple of chords and a melody, but it's so hard to keep perspective. If I had to go a year and not

remember always being the youngest guy. I'm 25 and I'm the old man."

He launches vigorously into a rapid-fire monologue about his neurosis. "I watched this big Eric Clapton biography the other night. You see him and these guys all doing cool things when they're young, and then they discover the blues and they just get stuck. Like that's when you've arrived, when you've discovered the blues."

He's cooking now, wired and hyperactive. "So, for the past year, I've been thinking, *Dude, I've got to do the blues.*

I've got to follow rock suit. I've got to do a blues record. Because everyone, when they think they've arrived, it means they're the farthest away they've ever been.

"Every band goes through that thing. They get caught up on the soul, and they've got this jive chick singing in the background."

He ends his tirade bellowing, "The next record's gonna be a blues record, I swear it. I'm just gonna bite the bullet and go for

it. No more of this trying to be innovative. I'm going for the blues, the sign of washed up, and I'm just gonna gather it, man. Run with my arms open toward it."

Maybe only then will fans realize the true wonderwork that is The Fashion Focus, only then will they realize what Martin has accomplished in it. He has retained the Starflyer formula while boldly changing all of the elements.

He's not pretentious enough to have planned it, nor is he so ignorant that it was accidental. He's just a Californian who loves music and who hopes to keep creating it as long as humanly possible.

Even if it does eventually end up sounding like the blues. 7



laughs, sarcasm kicking in again. "If there is to be a biography of Jason Martin, just play 'I Drive a Lot.'"

The rest of the record is dedicated to weightier themes, themes Starflyer has typically neglected. As "We Are The Ordinary" blossoms in its closing moments, Martin moans, *Sometimes we don't have a life.* "All The Time" opens with the humble proclamation, *We don't make the world go round/ We don't know much about life and little things.* "I ruin my life thinking about the new record, or why people aren't into the band, and it really doesn't matter. I get so nervous," he quietly admits.

"I don't want the music to become an

be able to release something, I'd go nuts. I just can't bear to think that there's a decent song and that me and [my wife] Julie are the only ones who are gonna hear it. I love music. I love chords and melody. I guess it does to me what a good baseball game does to my old man."

It is on the new album that Martin's love of melody is most obvious. He gets edgy when it's suggested he may not be able to do this forever. The record ends with Martin sighing, "These are days like Methuselah." Martin has painfully watched peers like Poor Old Lu and The Prayer Chain dissolve around him. "I'm starting to feel like the old man now. I

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Scaterd Few

It's been said in the '80s, the alternative kids either listened to Steve Taylor or Scaterd Few. This should come as no surprise to Scaterd Few frontman Allan Aguirre, as he is the one who allegedly initiated the claim. Of course, *Sin Disease*, their record that decisively ended the decade, has been widely regarded as the greatest Christian punk rock record. Ever.

And breaking new ground often leads to controversy. But the members of Scaterd Few thrive on it. "I'm an easy target, and I deliberately do that," Aguirre says. Hey, it gives them something to talk about at dinner.

Aguirre and Matt Wignall (founder of Jackson Rubio Records) went salt-water fly-fishing in Los Angeles; it was on that trip that the record deal with Jackson Rubio was closed. Wignall tells it best: "Our love for God and fly-fishing brought us together."

Incidentally, the funk anthem "Win the Fisher" on *Grandmother's Spaceship*, the Few's latest record, was written for an old fly-fishing friend who recently passed away; it also draws heavily on Christ's exhortation to be fishers of men.

With the long-awaited release of *Grandmother's Spaceship*, Scaterd Few is once again pushing the envelope. "We're trying to get back to the aggressive roots, but still take it into the future," Archer says. "What's the point of going back and doing that same stuff over and over again? We don't want to be like The Eagles."

The idea behind *Grandmother's Spaceship* started with a story someone told Aguirre. "This guy told me about his grandmother who was going to be visited by aliens," he says. "They told her the world was coming to an end, but not to worry—they were going to come down and rescue her and her family."

"He remembers going to the store and buying clothes in incremental sizes so he'd have something to wear as he grew up in space. The whole family converged on the grandmother's house, the rendezvous point, at the appointed time. And I asked him, What happened? What happened? I'm getting really excited about the story. He said, Oh ... the family didn't go. They changed their minds. Well, of course they didn't

get taken away and the world hasn't ended."

On *Grandmother's Spaceship*, Aguirre and company consider the parallels between the reality of Christ's return and the science fictions that have people watching the skies for the wrong reasons. Aguirre explains the album: "It's bait for a society enthralled with the paranormal, X-Files, spaceships and UFO's. While a lot of these people think God is a God of the past, He's also a God of the future."

"We do not believe in UFOs as our salvation," Archer says. "Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior, God, period. The alien face thing [on the album cover] ... ties into the idea that we are aliens in this world. It's all over the Bible."

The band feels the criticism that abounds in the Christian music market seems to be at an all-time high. Archer says, "If we thought this was truly offensive, we probably wouldn't do it. We're a tabloid society and we just have too much time on our hands. How does gossip get started? Usually because there's something in your life you don't want to deal with—that makes it rationally easier to focus on someone else and compare him or her to yourself. Oh, look at him—I must be doing OK."

The members of Scaterd Few hope to evangelize non-believers and challenge believers. All four of them are heavily involved in their churches, either teaching the Word or participating in church worship teams.

And the whole point of *Grandmother's Spaceship* and the "We Are Not Of This World" tour? "Worship God," say both Aguirre and Archer. Archer continues, "Probably the biggest difference on this record from a lot of the other ones [is that] we made a very conscious decision to make this a worship album."

—Steve Tudor



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Ask Doug Moss, lead singer, guitarist, and principal songwriter of Honey, what the overall theme for *Lovely*, last year's critically acclaimed debut on Sublime Records, was and he'll answer simply, "love."

And now, with the release of *Lost On You*, their long-awaited second album, the new buzz word, according to lead guitarist Bill Dow, is "hope."

"We wanted to stay away from angst or stupid alternative-sounding things," Dow says. "We wanted the music to be really

(including opening at a Prayer Chain reunion show in Anaheim last October), the members of Honey sat down and discussed ideas for their second album. "This record is a lot more developed than *Lovely* was," Moss explains. "Those were the first songs I had ever written for anything, and were done when we were just getting together as a band. The new songs are a lot more layered and melodic."

During the recording of two tracks—the title cut and "I Am"—with Mason and Haseltine in Nashville, Lagestee left the

hopeful, without being cheesy or over the top. We wanted a record with a lot of hope and faith, because we felt that better reflected who we are."

And that it does. Produced by ex-Prayer Chain members Eric Campuzano and Wayne Everett (with two songs produced by Steve Mason and Dan Haseltine of Jars of Clay), *Lost On You* is a bold, masterful stroke, weaving melodic and sometimes mysterious guitar lines with impassioned lyrics.

Honey—Moss, Dow, and Moss' brother, drummer Roger (bass player Paul Lagestee left the band during the recording of *Lost On You*)—found recognition when they recorded an independent CD which got the attention of Sub•Lime Records. Their label debut, *Lovely*, was a fusion of sonically inspired music and Moss' often-obscure lyrics, which ran the range from simply confusing (*maybe another 90, maybe a 43, 51st and fairplay*) to downright disturbing (*the sound is a knife, pleasing and scarring his nine-year-old-frame*).

"My lyrics do come across as abstract at times," he admits. "But I think it allows me opportunities to talk to people about what the songs mean—and I enjoy that. Talking to someone who is curious about a song or a line in a song is one way that God uses me to communicate to people. If everything I wrote needed no explanation or was obvious in its meaning, a lot of those opportunities might not be there. As far as what I want to accomplish in my songwriting, that is simply to write and sing whatever God lays on my heart—and be real and honest about what that is. I think we've done that completely with this new record."

After a short, two-week tour and a couple of festival dates

band over musical differences. The remaining band members went to California to record with Campuzano and Everett. It was there the album really began to take shape and develop more than one vibe, which Dow admits was purely intentional. "[*Lost On You*] is diverse, with both slower songs and more rock songs," he says. "We wanted everything to be beautiful and melodic, and not just distortion and guitar solos."

"I like the songs that seem to come from nowhere," Moss adds. "They seemed the most pure, without us overthinking them. Sometimes we talk about trying to write songs in a certain style, but sometimes a song is just given to you and you just have to touch it up, so to speak."

—Derek Walker



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Getting attention in Nashville as an unsigned Christian rock band is like trying to get attention at a freak show by wearing a funny hat. "There are so many great bands and musicians here," says Plaid frontman Brannon Hancock. "It's hard to play in front of kids that see concerts every week because it takes so much to capture their attention. It's almost as if audiences in Nashville come to concerts and just sit back and say, *Impress me.*"

Somewhere along the line, Plaid managed to impress the right people. Just two years old, the band started nabbing opening slots for big-name bands at Rocketown, the Michael W.

acoustic guitar through rolling fields of accordion and Hammond organ. The corners are not crammed with gadgetry. They do not brilliantly rethink the pop equation. Hancock himself admits, "We are not trying to do something that no one has ever done before. Looking ahead, I predict that we will stay pretty true to being a guitar rock band: volume, power chords, distortion, riffs in drop-D tuning ..." The thing about Plaid is they caught attention by playing it straight.

The record is called *Understanding God*, a title that works two ways. In addition to implying a sympathetic Creator, it describes His creation's attempts to fathom Him. Plaid didn't

intend this double entendre. It just worked out that way. "I don't want people to listen to our songs and have to sit there and figure out what we're talking about," Hancock says of his forthright writing style. "I always want to write a song that people can

relate to. They are all about my life with Christ, day in and day out."

Each song on *Understanding God* offers a clear message in a way that comes natural to a group of youth worship leaders.

Smith-run Nashville nightclub whose reputation stretches several thousand miles. Hancock, who had been doing time in a Nirvana cover band called Bent just a few months previous, suddenly found himself and his bandmates on Rocketown's Five Favorite Unsigned Bands list.

That was the first step on a short road that ended in the arms of Rustproof Records, a label barely older than most of the bands on its roster. But it doesn't stop there. So wowed was general manager Mark Quattrachi by the band's Zeppelin-fried music that he passed a three-song demo on to Choir frontman and alternative Christian music legend Derri Daugherty. "He started off engineering, but he really did a lot of the production as well," Hancock says. "Most of the guitar tones are totally Derri, with some input from [the band]."

Hancock gets youthful starry-eyes when he talks about Daugherty's involvement. Without coaxing, he professes his long-time love for The Choir (along with other ACM notables like the 77s and Prayer Chain), describing the band as a phenomenal group of musicians.

He offers nostalgia-colored memories of more obvious inspirations just as quickly. "Sixties and 70s rock had an influence on me growing up," he says without the slightest bit of side-stepping or too-cool art rock posturing. Hancock doesn't strain to produce the names of obscure, detuned garage bands. He's not that image-conscious yet. "I heard my dad's Three Dog Night and Blood Sweat and Tears records, and in the car it was always classic rock radio stations. I discovered *Led Zeppelin IV* in high school and wondered if I would ever write a riff like 'Black Dog' or 'When the Levee Breaks.'"

Plaid's songs are fired through with such gritty riffing, all post-grunge and pre-pop, and Hancock's impassioned yowl woven through the fabric of flannel and corduroy. When the melee quiets, as it does on "Beautiful," it is to ride bareback

Each evidences Plaid's curious identity—young men in a young band for young people in a land of giant-sized grown ups. "I think the thing that people see in us that sets us apart from many other bands and performers is the passion we have for what we are playing and singing about," says Hancock. "I think, and I hope people see that we mean it—that we are real."

Rocketown saw it, so the band got experience. Quattrachi saw it, so the band got a contract. Teenagers saw it, so the band got a fan base. In a town as crowded and jaded as Nashville, four young men clung fast to wide-eyed wonder. Now they've got a future.

—J. Edward Keyes

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Some things were just meant to be together. Take the new Christian sonic rock band Viva Voce, for example. Members Kevin and Anita Robinson seem to have the best of both worlds—being married to each other as well as having the opportunity to sing, travel and share Jesus with people. “Knowing that Kevin is God’s chosen one for me is just so awesome,” Anita says.

Kevin and Anita’s love for each other and for God is obvious on *Hooray for Now*, their debut album from Cadence

want to play as much as possible. And it’s been such a blessing to be in this thing together as husband and wife.”

Viva Voce, Italian for “by word of mouth,” is the goal of their ministry. “We hope,” says Kevin, “that through our lives and music the body of Christ will be edified and people will be encouraged to reflect the mercy and grace that God has given them. This is the calling the Lord has given us, and we’re excited to see how it will unfold.”

—Rachel Schlabach

Viva Voce bankshots

Communications. (Viva Voce was first signed to Cadence in 1997 when they contributed to the Christmas compilation album *Love, Peace & Joy*.)

Songs like “He Touches Stars” and “Bent” are worship songs directed to God. However, the song “June” is about their love for each other, tracing it from first date to their wedding day. The track “Beautiful” is a love song that Anita wrote for Kevin. “‘Beautiful’ is the first song that I ever wrote for Kevin,” Anita says. “We were dating when I wrote it, and at that time we’d always get together and record songs and share ideas for music and lyrics. I played the song for him one day and soon after we were able to record it in a real studio. Now it’s on the album.”

“Fear of Flying,” the first single from the album, is a song about the fear we sometimes feel of letting God handle all areas of our lives completely. “I’d like to put to rest the misconception that ‘Fear of Flying’ is about fear of airplanes or spaceships,” Kevin states. “It has nothing to do with either of those things, but I guess I could see where it would be confusing because when the label shipped the single it came with those little packs of peanuts like you’d get on a flight. The song is really about times where we get afraid to let the Lord handle things that we’re used to holding onto.”

Performing is something Kevin and Anita love to do. Since Viva Voce first emerged, they’ve had the opportunity to perform with Five Iron Frenzy, Starflyer 59, Common Children and The Call. “Live shows are what we love most,” says Kevin. “Just being able to minister that way to people is a real privilege.” This past summer they performed at many festivals, including Cornerstone, Atlanta Fest, Sonshine and TOM. They also had their first national tour with Morella’s Forest and Joy Electric. “That tour was such a blast,” Anita says. “Ideally, we’d like to be gone all the time at concerts or festivals. We



bankshots Israelites

While many bands have a mission, this Southern California ska outfit preaches a manifesto. The Israelites want you to know two things that set them apart from a lot of bands in the Christian music industry: They are committed to ministering the Gospel, and they play your old man’s kind of ska. “We just have total respect for the original style,” says Rich Carlsdedt, singer, drummer, guitarist and Moses for the Israelites.

“If you are ministering the Gospel, then you need to do it in every form possible. Our focus is reaching toward those in the traditional side of ska. It’s not about how much merchandise we sell.”

The Israelites’ commitment to ministry is in full effect at their shows, where altar calls are not uncommon. “The Word says if one person gets saved, all the angels in Heaven rejoice,” Carlsdedt says. “Even if it’s a Christian realizing, *I’ve got this problem in my life*



In the midst of what is commonly called the third wave of ska, many of today’s hippest kids don’t know the original ska sound. “I wish they would at least know the roots,” Carlsdedt says.

The Israelites have found that zealous adherence to tradition doesn’t always mean big record sales. To date, Carlsdedt runs their record label, Kingston Beat, as he has for nine years, while watching third wave bands rise to commercial success.

Nevertheless, he is not bitter. “I’m not putting down the new stuff because, as a Christian, I don’t care what kind of music you play,” he says.

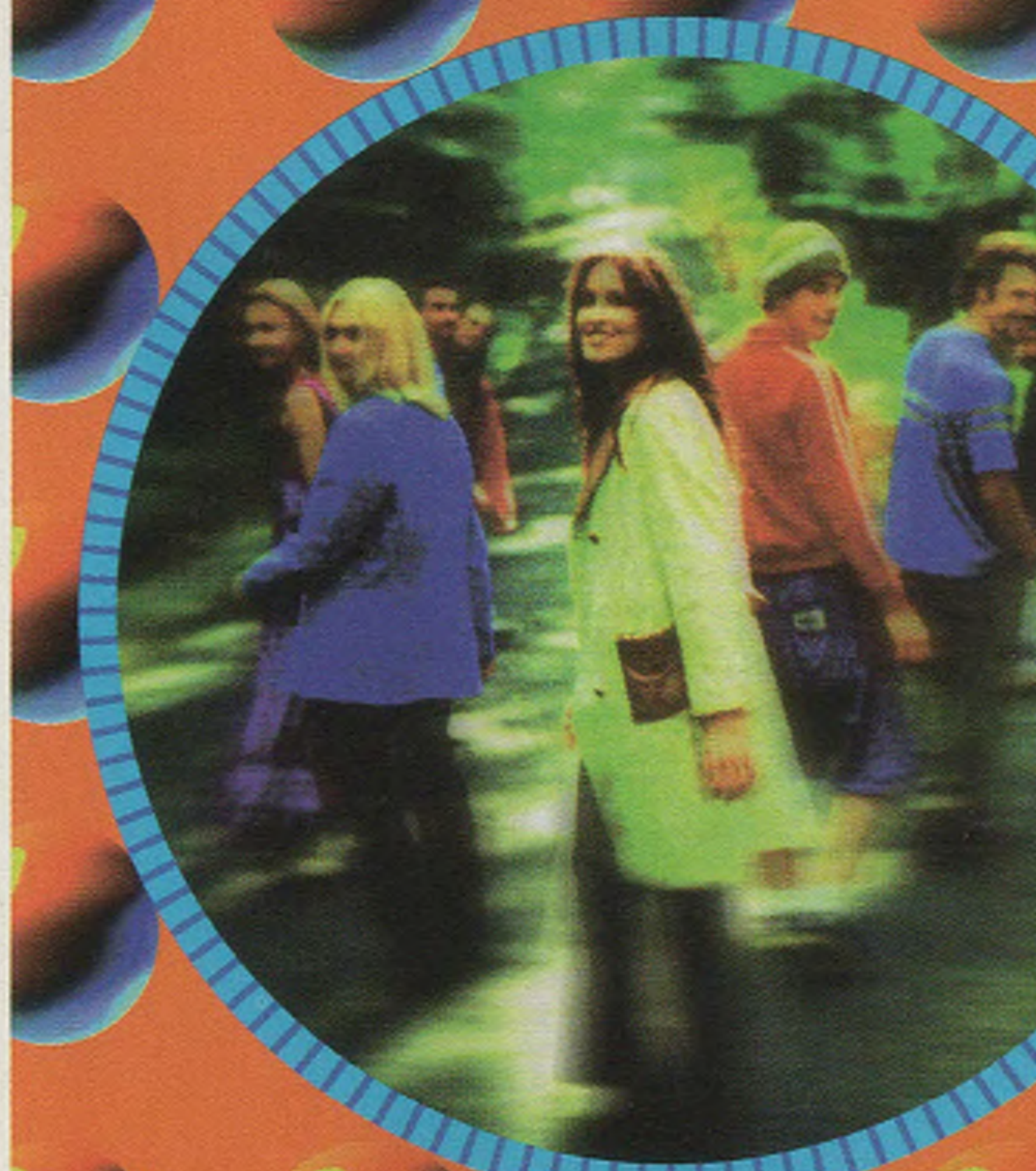
and *I’ve got to get rid of it*, that’s worth it. That’s worth our drive. It’s seeing those people change their lives.”

Carlsdedt shares his vision for the Christian music industry. “I want to encourage bands, labels, promoters, everybody to minister the Gospel,” he says.

“We need to get back to the basics. It’s not about contracts. It’s not about all this big hype. It’s about getting people saved cause that’s what the whole thing was started for.” The Israelites are ready to enter the promised land.

—Nathan Mattia

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so here's
the plan



the plan

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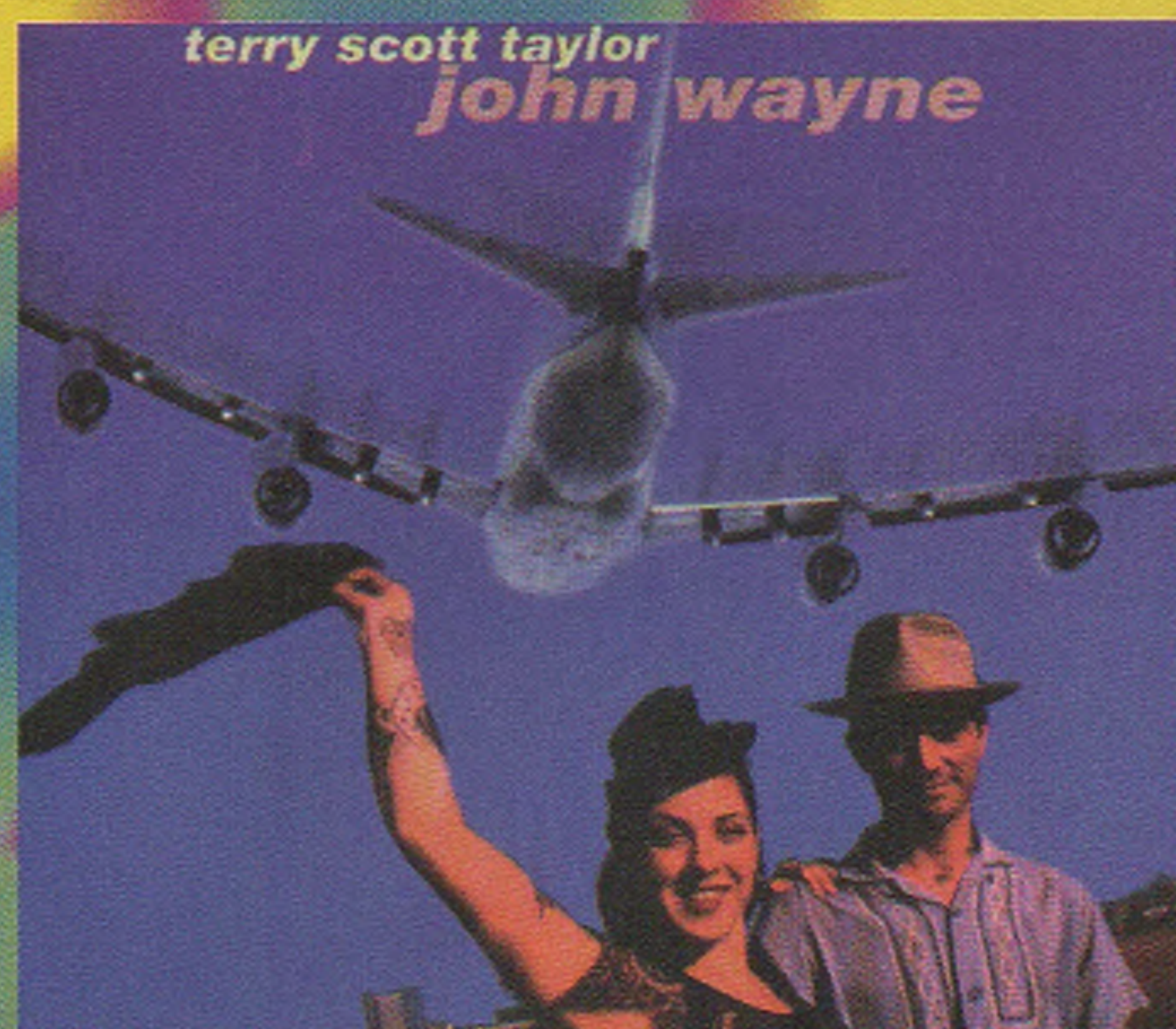
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REVIEWS



Terry Scott Taylor

John Wayne
KMG

As icons come and go, there's probably no better metaphorical image for the spiritual and literal terra firma that is Orange County, Southern California—the conservative Christian stronghold and creative hotbed for most Christian rock and alternative music—than that of John Wayne, the gun-toting movie star, pilgrim in a strange land and model for self-reliant individualism gone awry.

On *John Wayne*, Terry S. Taylor—arguably the father of modern Christian rock—continues exploring the meaning of life and faith, the purpose of music and art, and the struggle to live meaningfully in a world overly impressed with commercial success and driven by self-centered need. It's hard to live in a "Boom Town" when you've got "Writer's Block." It's difficult to tell the truth in love, when "You Told Them Exactly What I Didn't Say."

Musically, Taylor touches all the important bases. There's some country shtick in "Ten Gallon Hat," right down to the yodel and whistle. Lush vocal harmonies recall the Beach Boys (Taylor was the mastermind behind *Surfonic Water Revival*, after all), while smart Beatlesque melodies and edgy guitar sounds duel for dominance. Putting the exultation of youth to shame, Taylor rocks, but he does it in a tuneful, intelligent way. Experience and craft, depth, insight and heart should not be undervalued.

As is Taylor's way, these tunes flow from

difficulty to resolution, from life in pieces to peace of mind, although it is not strictly a concept album. The hero is distracted and underpaid in "Writer's Block" and "Mr. Flutter," misunderstood in "Too Many Angels" and "What I Didn't Say," and the evil ones prosper in "Big Shot" and "Miniature Girl." The hero faces his shortcomings in "Ten Gallon Hat," debunks false gods in "Hey, John Wayne," and finds that God's love is a sustaining presence in "Chicken Crosses the Road" and "You Lay Down."

I'll be surprised if Christian music releases a smarter, more fun album this year—and certainly not one that bridges rock's greatest influences with a sound that's so right and of the moment. But that's just my opinion. It hasn't changed about Terry Taylor since *Alarma*.

—Brian Q. Newcomb

Starflyer 59

The Fashion Focus
Tooth & Nail



tar feedback clouding the mix. Just listen to the festive jingle bells supplementing "Holiday Song" to hear a marked difference

in the group's sound.

Martin's big guitar still rings out loud and clear, only now he's putting his fine playing inside a larger musical context. In addition to Martin's likable licks, one can also hear moody synths, swinging organ and lively percussion. *The Fashion Focus* may be Starflyer 59's best album to date because the group lets the spirit of experimentation be the star of its show.

—Dan MacIntosh

Clear

Clear
Ardent

There's no confusion here. This five-member Minneapolis-based band has made the purpose and message of their self-titled debut album, *Clear*, pretty obvious—if not through their band title, then through their poetic message.



The sincere, honest lyrics, coupled with their solid acoustic rock sound, make for a sonance that clearly exhibits Clear's objective to share the love of Christ through song.

The upbeat "My Blindness" tells the familiar story of the blind man who was healed by Jesus (Mark 8:22-26). Accompanied by a boppin' chord progression accented by organ syncopations, the song's uplifting chorus, *Jesus healed my blindness/ Lifted up the veil and His light poured on my face/ Jesus healed my blindness/ With His love I am alive in His grace*, relates the blind man's need to be healed from his blindness to our human need to be healed from sin.

Showcasing the group's versatility is the worshipful "Chasing After the Wind" by guitarist/vocalist/chief lyricist Matt Berry. Consisting of nothing more than the heartfelt vocals of lead singer Alison Ogren and a subtle piano accompaniment, the song expresses the true joy and fulfillment that can be found through the blood of Jesus. The chorus, *What could I acquire to make my heart delight in what it finds/ Nothing I desire can bring me joy like You*, demonstrates the band's transparency and vulnerability to the Lord's will.

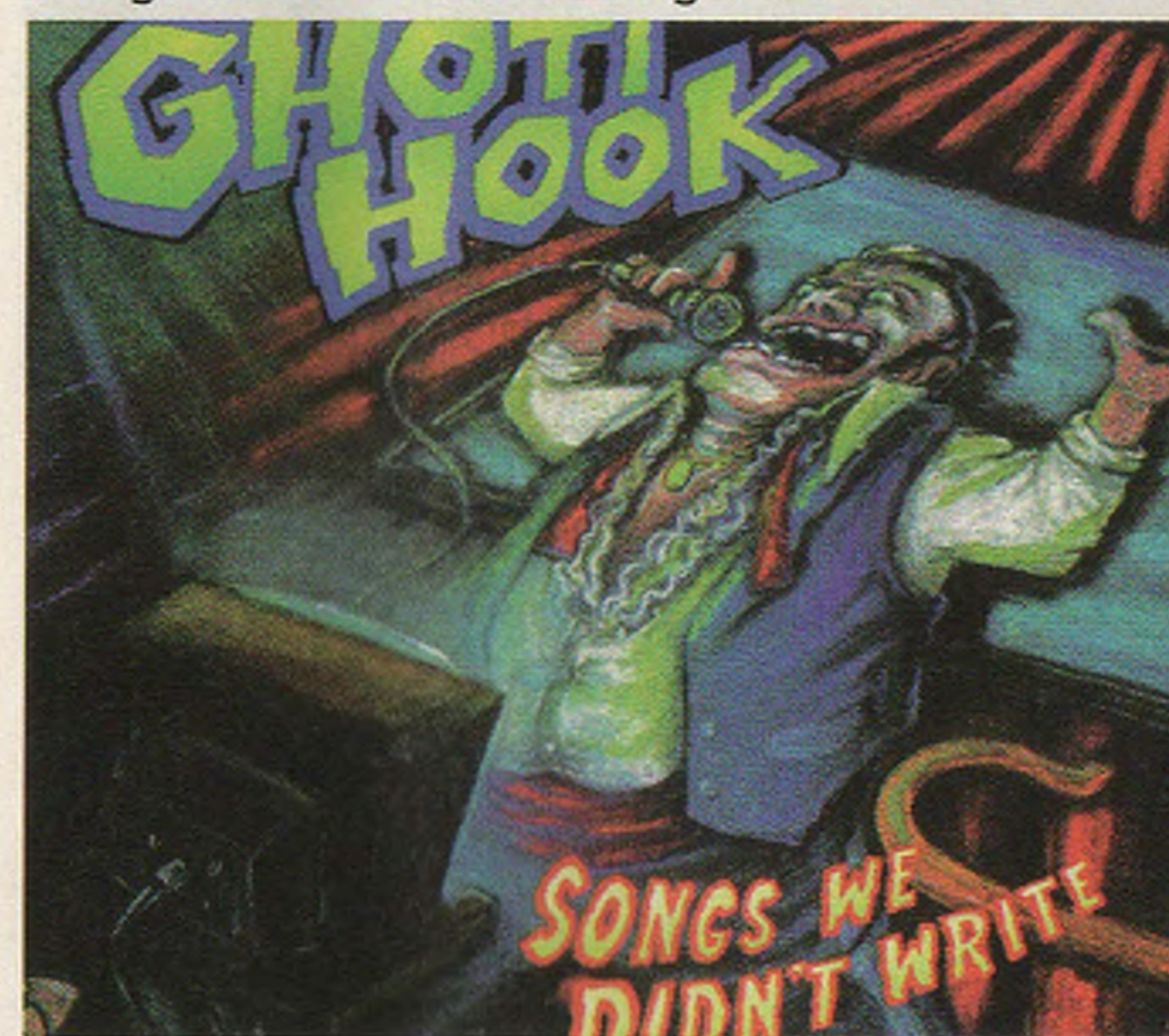
As Clear is vulnerable to God, they are flexible to different musical styles. Throughout the album, Ogren's alterna-folk vocals adjust to changes in accompaniment, whether it's an electric guitar/full trap set or a solo acoustic guitar. A good choice for anyone looking for melodic rock with a sincere message.

—Ashley Hassebroek

Ghoti Hook

Songs We Didn't Write
Tooth & Nail

Since punk rock's inception, bands have been applying hyperactive tempos to songs not normally associated with the punk rock movement. But giving pop songs the old buzzsaw guitar assault



treatment is no longer the novelty it used to be. With *Songs We Didn't Write*, Ghoti Hook could have very easily slapped together a collection of popular songs ready-made for instant-mix slam dancing.

Instead, they have given us an album reeking with sincere appreciation for the artists and songs they cover. They share a love for rock 'n' roll with Joan Jett on "I Love Rock & Roll;" they throw in horns on "Walking On Sunshine;" and they tip their hats to the songs of yesteryear with

"Earth Angel." If that's not enough, they even do friendly justice to Michael W. Smith's "Friends."

Those expecting Ghoti Hook's zany side won't be disappointed either. Elvis is back in the building with "Hunka Hunka Burning Love," and faux cowboy hats are dusted off for Willie Nelson's "On the Road Again." There's never a dull moment, when you're hooked on covers done by Ghoti Hook.

—Dan MacIntosh

The Normals

Better Than This
ForeFront

On their debut, *Better Than This*, The Normals brandish charged guitars, melodic vocals and music laced with passionate lyrics. Thematically, most of the songs focus on human weakness and God's grace and love, which are able to overcome those weaknesses. The messages are clothed in descriptive analogies, as the

Burlap to Cashmere
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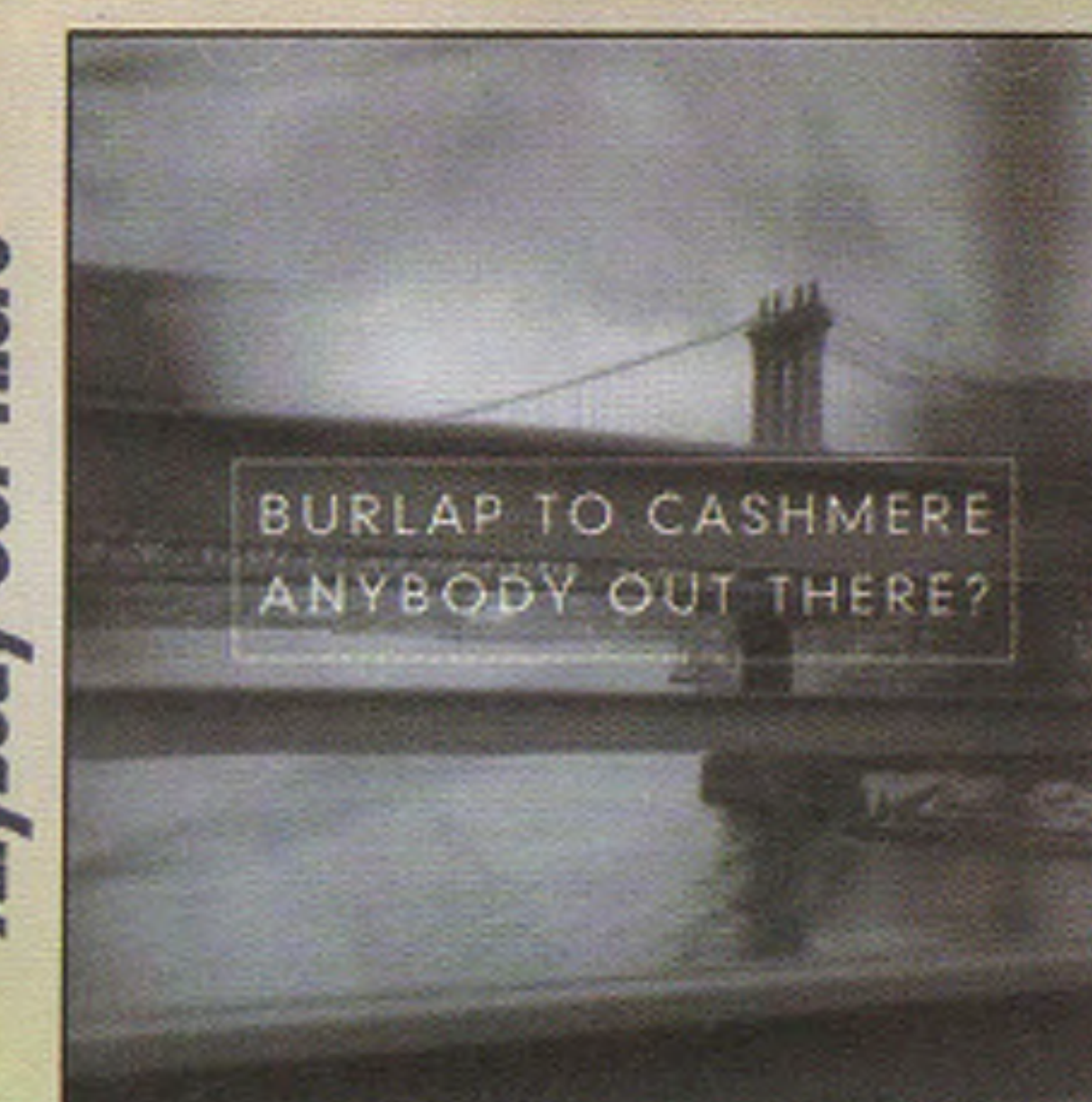
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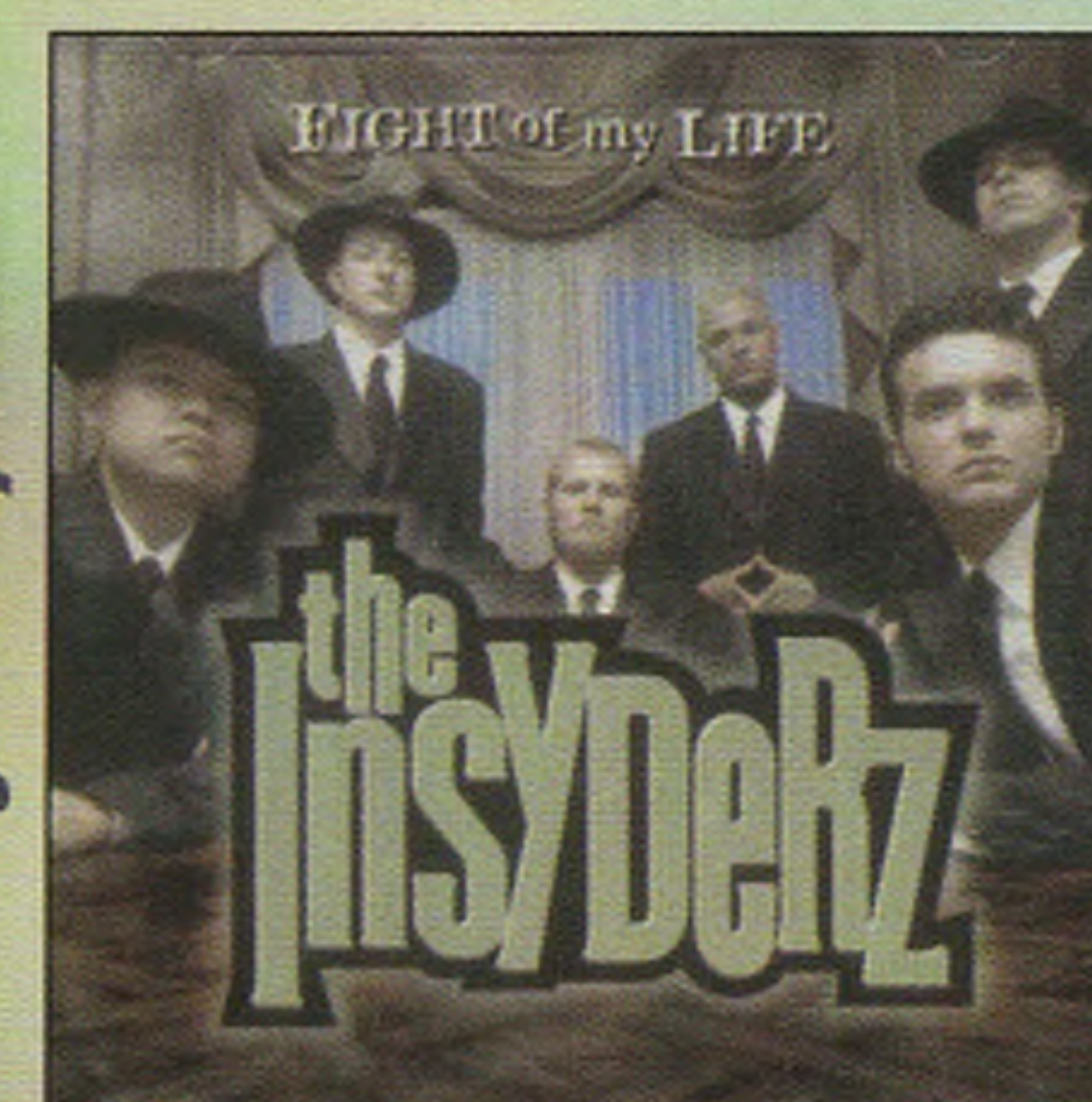
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songs portray realistic experiences in the Christian life. The creative lyrics vary from crying out for forgiveness to desiring to surrender all to God.

The inventive title track relates the



thoughts of a backslidden Christian. *I'm writing a book/ But it's got no pages/ Cause You were all I had to say and I guess I have walked away from You/ I'm too slow/ There's God on the phone/ Leave a message/ I'll get back to You soon.* In "Apron Full of Stains (Everything)," the verses describe experiences with a sorrow-

ful waitress and a homeless man—showing a desire to love others as Christ loved.

These catchy tunes all have a seriousness to them, relating what Christians go through and how all fail at some point or another. But there is also a triumphant note that God is a forgiving, loving God.

Fans of alternative/pop bands such as Seven Day Jesus and All Star United are sure to like The Normals. Their debut presents unique lyrics and musical arrangements. Some will find the lyrics convicting and many will consider the music satisfying. It's an album worth listening to more than once.

—Serena Haneline

House of Wires

You Are Obsolete

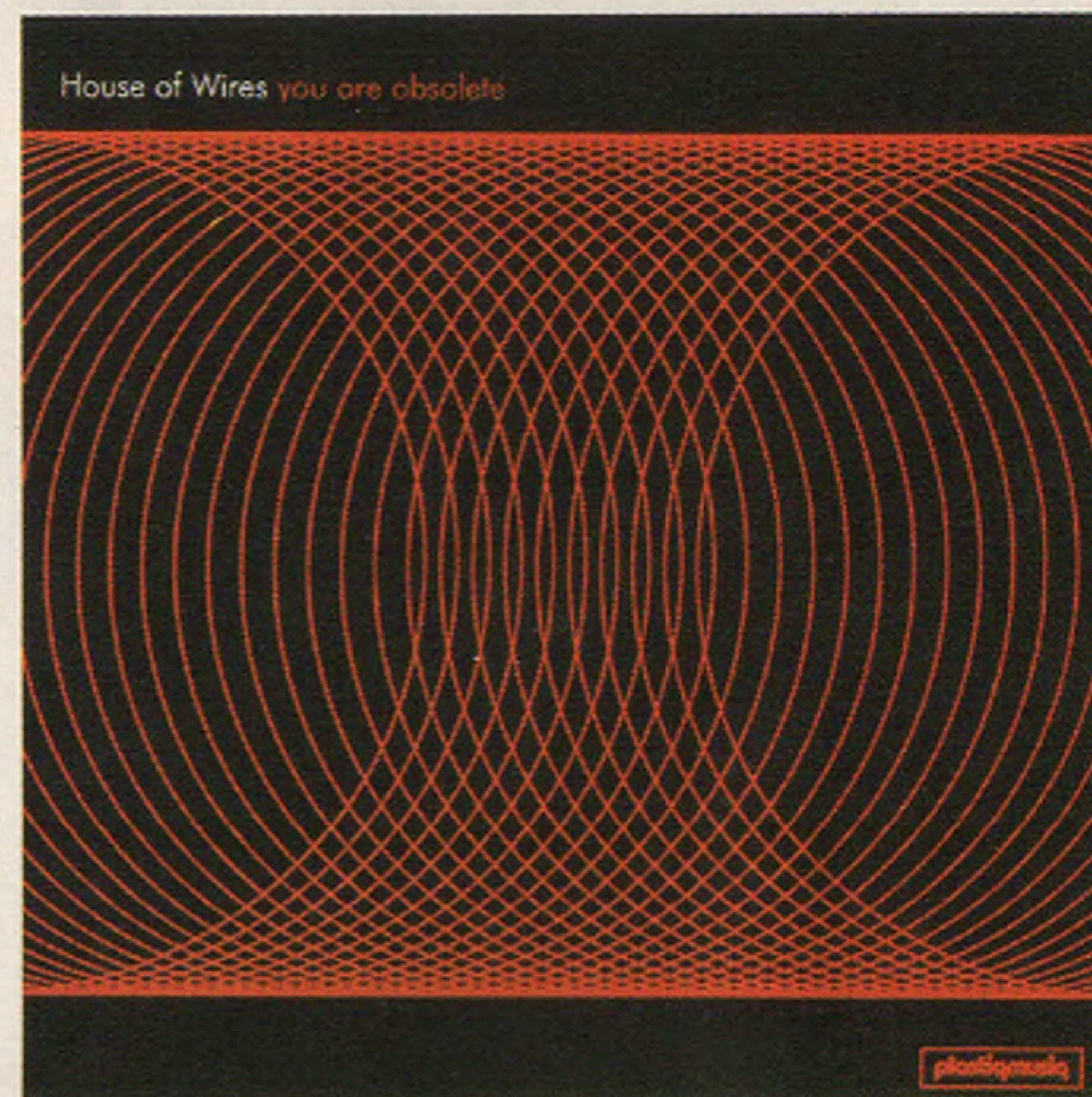
Plastiq Musiq/Tooth & Nail

One cannot be blamed for getting lost in the dense matter that occupies most of Orange County-based House of Wires' debut album, *You Are Obsolete*. Jon Sonnenberg and Robert Gutschow spread the layered,

mechanical beats and sinister strings and synths on thick. The result is fascinating.

With a decidedly new wave bent in their vocals (sung in a British accent that, at times, resembles The Cure's Robert Smith), House of Wires (formerly Pivot Clowj) is the first co-release between Tooth & Nail and Plastiq Musiq, the fledgling, all-electronic label home to such promising upstarts as Brittanika and Mothership.

What House of Wires has to offer with their full-length debut is 12 variations on the theme of defying the rules American pop music has set before them. Whether employing snoring synths and a ghostly female vocal against a strolling jungle beat for a cover of the Pixies' "Where Is My Mind?" or stuttering rhythms and a haunting melody for "Everything," there is nary a boring moment on *You Are Obsolete*. In a musical subculture where repetition is the law of the land, House of Wires dares to write melodies much in the vein of Joy



Electric (whose mastermind, Ronnie Martin, produces). By the time the inventive symphonic loop and funky beat fades in the instrumental last track, "Violin," the listener will most likely want to start back from the first song and enjoy this creative record all over again.

—Derek Walker

Bleach

Static

ForeFront

Schizophrenia can greatly impair one's ability to live a normal life, but such abnormal ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving can make for adventurous and entertaining rock 'n' roll.

Bleach's new album, *Static*, jerks back and forth with the spastic joy of someone

with little self-control. This movement may be harmful to the spinal cord, but it sure is fun to watch.

Characterized by riffing guitars and cheesy organs straight out of the Devo school of Odd Boy music, Bleach makes music especially designed for the sideshow stage. Or as "Drive" states, *It's Jesus and my four wheel Vaudeville show*. Another song, "Country Western Star," drops names such as Floyd Cramer and Merle Haggard, but sounds a country mile away from anything played at the Grand Ole Opry.

Now and then, Bleach drops the sci-fi masks long enough to get serious as they



sing of the Second Coming on "Waving Goodbye": *But if the thief comes here tonight/ I hope to see you on the other side*. Overall, Bleach is much more colorful than the name implies.

—Dan MacIntosh

Happy Christmas

Various Artists

BEC

Ah, the sounds of Christmas. It's all too rare to find a Christian rock Christmas album, which makes something like *Happy Christmas* such a happy occasion.

With a fun mix of traditional and new songs, *Happy Christmas* sports fresh arrangements that still play it pretty straight. Representing the classics: The Supertones rev up "Joy To The World"; Joy Electric puts a futuristic bounce on "Winter Wonderland"; Seven Day Jesus brings a gentle passion to "Oh Holy Night"; and House Of Wires gives a surprisingly delicate electronic reading of "Do You Hear What I Hear?"

Less traditional, but nonetheless beloved, Christmas songs are represented as well: Pep Squad gives "Feliz Navidad" a



cool swagger; Five Iron Frenzy captures the air of rampant expectation in the Rich Mullins composition "You Gotta Get Up."

Rounded out with brand-new songs from the likes of Sarah Masen, Fold Zandura and Huntingtons, *Happy Christmas* has enough energy and imagination for fans of these sorts of artists. Better, there is just enough grip on the traditional sounds and the spirit of the season that *Happy Christmas* truly sounds like a Christmas record. Happy, happy, joy, joy to the world.

—Chris Well

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Rock

- 1 THIRD DAY
Peace (Reunion)
- 2 SEVEN DAY JESUS
Big House (ForeFront)
- 3 THE W'S
The Devil Is Bad
(5 Minute Walk)
- 4 NEWSBOYS
Hallelujah (Star Song)
- 5 ALL STAR UNITED
La La Land (Reunion)
- 6 SIXPENCE NONE THE RICHER
I Can't Catch You (Squint)
- 7 AUDIO ADRENALINE
Chevette (ForeFront)
- 8 GRAMMATRAIN
Rocketship (ForeFront)
- 9 THE INSYDERZ
Oh Lord, You're Beautiful
(Squint)
- 10 VIVA VOCE
Fear Of Flying (Cadence)
- 11 BETWEEN THEIVES
The Spring (Tattoo)
- 12 LLOYD
Mr. Warner (Organic)
- 13 BIG TENT REVIVAL
God Made Heaven (ForeFront)
- 14 PLUMB
Pluto (Essential)
- 15 WORLD WIDE
MESSAGE TRIBE
Hypocrite (Warner Resound)

MODERN

- 1 THE W's
The Devil Is Bad
(5 Minute Walk)
- 2 VIVA VOCE
Fear Of Flying (Cadence)
- 3 SUPERTONES
Unite (BEC)
- 4 MXPX
I'm Okay, You're Okay
(Tooth & Nail)
- 5 SEVEN DAY JESUS
Big House (ForeFront)
- 6 FIVE IRON FRENZY
Every New Day (SaraBellum)
- 7 WORLD WIDE
MESSAGE TRIBE
Hypocrite (Warner Resound)
- 8 THE INSYDERZ
Oh Lord, You're Beautiful
(Squint)
- 9 SIXPENCE NONE THE RICHER
I Can't Catch You (Squint)
- 10 SQUAD FIVE-0
You're The One (Bulletproof)
- 11 PLUMB
Pluto (Essential)
- 12 SKILLET
Locked In A Cage (ForeFront)
- 13 MISS ANGIE
Trampoline (Myrrh)
- 14 KOSMOS EXPRESS
In My Face (Sub•Lime)
- 15 SLICK SHOES
Fulfilling (Tooth & Nail)

RHYTHMIC

- 1 GRITS
Hopes And Dreams (Gotee)
- 2 THE ECHOING GREEN
The Power Cosmic
(SaraBellum)
- 3 DELARAY
God Is In Control (CMN)
- 4 WORLD WIDE
MESSAGE TRIBE
Hypocrite (Warner Resound)
- 5 OUT OF EDEN
Can't Let Go (Gotee)
- 6 FAITH MASSIVE
Perfect Love (N•Soul)
- 7 AJ MORA
Jesus Christ Is Lord
(N•Soul)
- 8 CLOUD2GROUND
Madness For Love (N•Soul)
- 9 UNITY KLAN
Eternal Funk (Rescue)
- 10 SOZO
Life (N•Soul)

LOUD

- 1 PROJECT 86
Rebuttal (BEC)
- 2 ZAO
Lies of Serpents, A
River Of Tears (Solid State)
- 3 MORTIFICATION
From Your Side (Rowe)
- 4 LIVING SACRIFICE
Truth Solution (Solid State)
- 5 WYRICK
Down (Rugged)
- 6 THE BLAMED
Rage (Grrr)
- 7 RACKETS & DRAPES
Milk & Cookies (HM)
- 8 EVERY DAY LIFE
Pushing (Alarma)
- 9 EVERY DAY LIFE
Salt Circles (Alarma)
- 10 ONE BAD APPLE
Rent (Kingdom)

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KCLC 89.1 FM St. Charles, MO Saturday 7 PM	WAIF 88.3 FM Cincinnati, OH Saturday 8 PM	WITR 89.7 FM Rochester, NY Friday 10 PM
WCUW 91.3 FM Worcester, MA Tuesday 10 PM	WITR 89.7 FM Rochester, NY Friday 10 PM	WTTU 88.5 FM Nashville, TN Sunday 7 PM
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WUFM 88.7 FM Columbus, OH 24 Hours	WUFM 88.7 FM Columbus, OH 24 Hours	WCUW 91.3 FM Worcester, MA Sunday 4 PM
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It's about the message. Not the messenger.

It's a pretty old cliché: "Don't shoot me, I'm just the messenger." But some things become clichés because they ring so true. After all, when we hear news we don't like, we have a tendency to strike out in anger or despair at whoever brought us the bad news. They didn't make the news, they just reported it. But they're close by, so we blame them for it.

We see examples throughout history of messengers who were punished for simply telling the truth. In the Old Testament, it was the prophets. In the New Testament, it was the disciples. The people around them didn't like what they heard, so they flogged the messenger. They persecuted the messenger. They killed the messenger.

There is a converse phenomenon that, while not as famous, is equally true. When we hear news we like, we have a tendency to reach out in joy or excitement toward whoever brought us the good news. They didn't make the news, they just reported it. But they're close by, so we give them the credit.

For example, in Acts 14, we see Paul and Barnabus in Iconium, preaching with power and performing miracles. While all of the power came from the Lord, some of the people in Iconium began to worship Paul and Barnabus as gods. Rending his clothes in anguish, Paul exclaimed, "Friends, why are you doing this? We are merely human beings like yourselves!"

At various times, we are guilty of both mistakes. Sometimes we revile our Christian artists and thinkers and poets, because they are called to stretch us and we don't like that. Sometimes we put them on a pedestal, because we are so overwhelmed with Truth that we give them too much credit for their small involvement.

Make no mistake: We are called to excellence. We are called to be shrewd as serpents and harmless as doves (Matt. 10:16b). I am not talking about giving the artists and thinkers and poets an excuse to be lazy.

However, we as fans—and, however you want to cloak it in

hyper-spirituality, we are, in the end, "fans"—need to remember that these are flawed human beings. They eat. They sleep. They get tired. They get irked. They get needy. They sin.

But then, so do we.

In this "Christian" sub-culture we hide within, insulated from the world, we have a hard time "allowing" God to move among whom He chooses. The Bible clearly shows the Lord often works through the conspicuously flawed. The arrogant and the insecure. Murderers. Prostitutes. Thieves.

Now, I'm not trying to apologize for some secret. I do not drink. I do not smoke. On the ol' Pharisee-0-Meter (patent pending), I look pretty good. But none of these things make me holy. None of these things will save me. None of these things can guarantee that I speak the truth.

I would hope you judge what I say—what *anyone* says—by how it lines up with Scripture, and not with whether or not you "approve" of me. When Balaam's donkey spoke (Numbers 22:28), do you think Balaam checked the donkey's references?

God does what He will. He uses whom He will.

Follow the example of the Bereans: "The people of Berea were more open-minded ... and they listened eagerly to Paul's message. They searched the Scriptures day after day to check up on Paul and Silas, to see if they were really teaching the truth" (Acts 17:11).

So, here's the deal: Don't worship the people you read about in *7ball*. You can appreciate them, you can be a fan, you can think they rock or whatever.

Here's the other deal: Don't throw stones at them, either. As Jesus said, "Let those who have never sinned throw the first stone" (John 8:7b; see also Matt. 7:3-5).

And always remember, it's not about the messenger. It's about the Message.

—Chris Well

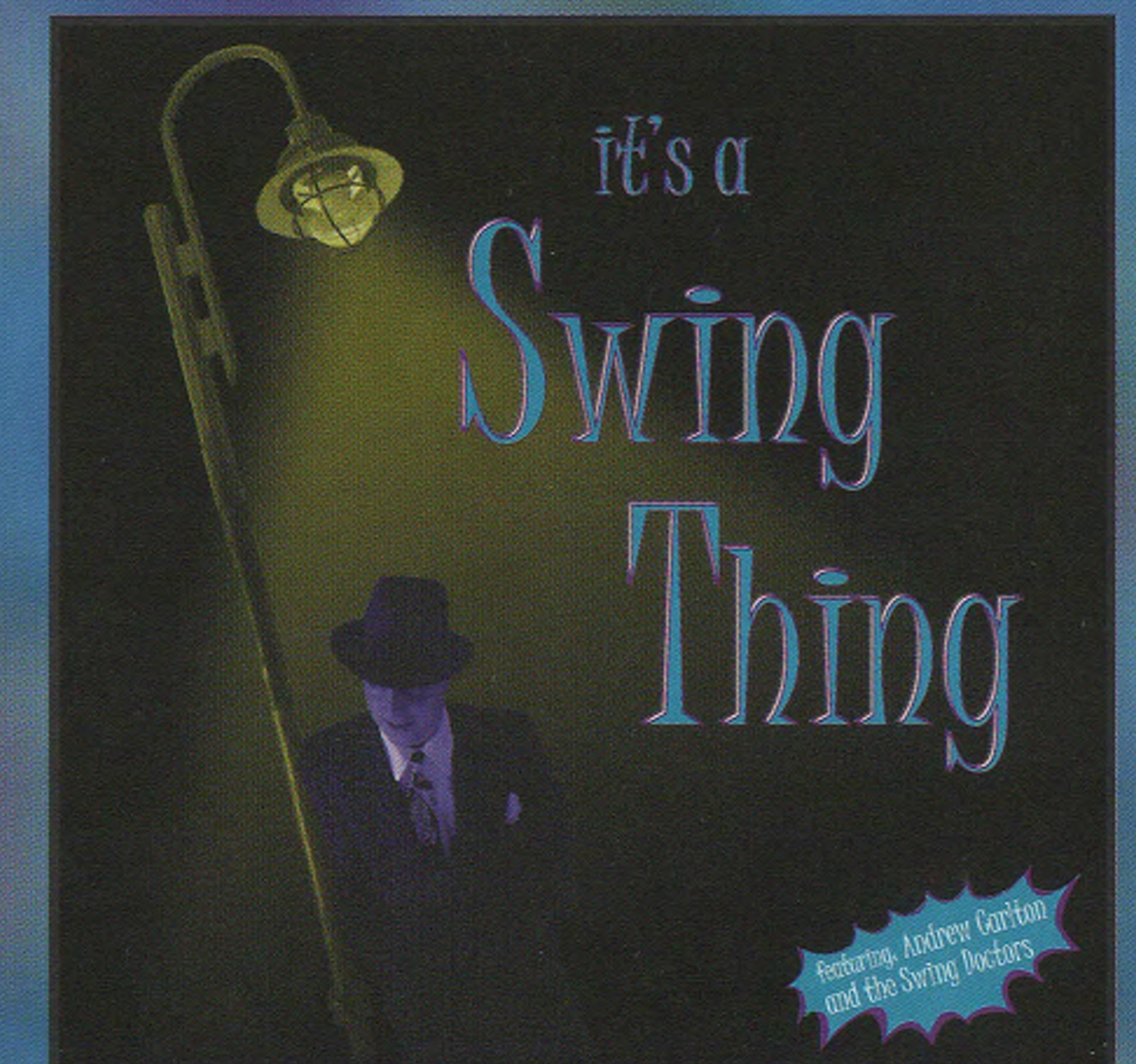
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